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THE
CONVERSATION OF A SOUL
WITH GOD:

A Theodicy.

BY
HENRY MAC CORMAC, M.D.

LONDON:
TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL.
1877.

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141. m. 557.

“Μάχη δὴ, φαμέν, ἀθάνατός ἐστιν ἡ τοιαύτη. Ξύμμαχοι δὲ ἡμῶν Θεοὶ τε ἅμα καὶ δαίμονες, ἡμεῖς δ' αὖ κτήματα θεῶν καὶ δαιμόνων, φθείρει δὲ ἡμᾶς ἀδικία καὶ ὕβρις μετὰ ἀφροσύνης, σώζει δὲ δικαιοσύνη καὶ σωφροσύνη μετὰ φρονήσεως, ἐν ταῖς τῶν θεῶν ἐμπύχοις δικοῦσαι δυνάμεσι.”—*Plato*.

“Deathless, we say, is our battle. God and the spirits whose possessions we are, fight for and with us. Injustice, folly, and insolence destroy us. Justice, wisdom, and intelligence, living powers that dwell with God, preserve us.”

In Memoriam.

TO

WILLIAM MAC CORMAC,

WHO PERISHED OF RELAPSING FEVER ON

THE WEST AFRICAN COAST,

THE DEAREST BROTHER, THE TRUEST FRIEND.

TO

MY GRANDCHILD,

JANE,

THE SWEETEST CHILD THAT EVER BREATHED.

„Es gibt nur einen Himmel,
Den ew'gen Sitz der Lust;
Sucht ihn nicht in den Fernen,
Sucht ihn nicht über Sternen,
Sucht ihn . . . in Eurer Brust.“

“There is one only Heaven,
The soul's eternal part,
Not placed in dim remoteness,
But only in the Heart.”

—Anon.

DEDICATION.

TO

ELISABETH, MY CHILD.

TO YOU, MY PRECIOUS ANGEL,

These Pages,

MINTED FROM THE VERY SUBSTANCE OF MY HEART,

I HERE INSCRIBE

IN EVIDENCE OF MY DEEP AFFECTION FOR YOU,

YOUR SURPASSING SWEETNESS, GOODNESS, AND TRUTH,

AS WELL AS THE PERFECT HAPPINESS WHICH I HAVE EVER

EXPERIENCED AT YOUR DEAR HANDS,

YOUR FATHER.

BOURNEMOUTH,

20th March 1877.

„Und wie die Seele selbstständig, im Gefühl der eigenen Kraft diese geistige Welt schuf, so ließ sie die Außenwelt und sich selbst aus dem Gedanken eines höhern Geistes hervorgehen, dessen inneres Wesen wie ihr eigenes sich nicht ergründen läßt, das sie aber so wenig bezweifeln kann als ihr eigenes Dasein, beleuchtet an dem, was sie gethan hat.“—
SPARSCHUH, *Kelten, Griechen, Germanen.*

PREFACE.

THIS volume aims to show that all beauty and goodness and sweetness and graciousness and wisdom and truth and love have their origin in God, and that outside of His perfect prevision and pervasive will, nothing can subsist or be. It sets forth that religion's real object is not to contend against death, since we should feel, know, that we are indeed eternal, but only submission, in thought, in feeling, and in act, to our divinest Lord, to whom the fulness of the heart is owing, and in whose very bosom we live and move and have our being.

It urges everywhere the reality of a personal immortality and a personal God, as distinct from nature and the universe, asserts that death, like life, is a divinest boon, and that the Deity does not so much directly hallow man's soul, as by heavenward aims and aspirings enable him to hallow it himself. It affirms that the Creator is not desirous of a false and meretricious, but

only of a just and real appreciation, wishes us to feel, know, that His ineffably perfect revealings are everywhere at hand, that they extend to all peoples, all places, have done so from the first until now, and, further, that they are the source of every present happiness and prospective joy.

It reiterates, not the downfall, but the elevation, the unutterable value, importance, and spirituality of each several soul, with the needfulness of believing, and believing only, in a future grounded on human affection and celestial love, as apart from views that identify man's spirit with clay, and those other views that affect to look on death as a punishment and a scare.

It sets forth that we are to aim, ceaselessly, at a lofty actuality, through the realisation of conceptions equally lofty. It rejects every conclusion adverse to the daily action and implied declarations, here and everywhere, now and always, of one only Ruler and Master, our divinest Father and Friend. It discards, wholly, the frantic doctrine of demoniacal possession or influence, otherwise than figuratively, substituting instead the distinct personal relation of each several soul to God. It affirms not merely a local or limited, but a universal supernaturalism, coincident with all nature, never intermitted or set aside. It insists that the Divine spirit is not shed on one or a few, only, but extends to

all men, that we are the children, possible sons and daughters of God, and that we are, all of us, inheritors of a kingdom truly divine. It affirms not a special or partial, merely, but a real, a universal providence extending to all souls, and from which no living sentient creature is excluded. It declares that our convictions are not meant or intended to be final or stationary, but progressive, even as the human intelligence itself is progressive. It proclaims that as all falsity is hurtful to the soul which harbours it, and that as love, unaided by the intellect, is capable of consecrating untruths the most senseless and unholy, it is of the last moment to human welfare that man's divine affections should be wedded, not to error or illusion, but only to the everlasting, the Divine Word set forth in nature and the living breast, without an instant's deviation or hesitancy from the beginning of things until now. For this, the real the veritable Word, is alone consistent with the actuality of design, the never-ceasing influence, here and hereafter, of a Being of unlimited wisdom and boundless tenderness, is, I submit, accordant with the most developed reason, the loftiest morals, as well as with the intimate convictions of all right thinking, properly minded men.

It rejects polytheism, belief in any gods but one, the existence and mission of a Devil or devils, any reconci-

liation of offenders against divine law with the Almighty other than by the influence of that truest contrition which leads to the relinquishment of evil and the practice of what is right. In short, it sets aside, with all the writer's might, and so far as his knowledge and ability permit, whatever seems adverse to the blessed, the holy, the everlasting rule of the one infinite, merciful, and compassionate God.

It holds as illusory and mistaken the oft asserted distinction between the world and heaven, divine law, so termed, and natural law, shows that both are, in every essential, one and the same, that this life and the unseen life are alike real, equally portions of the rule and reign of the infinite, the immaculate, ever-to-be-imitated divine Creator !

It adverts ceaselessly to the great spiritual realities that subsist within us and around, those bright celestial influences that raise man from the dust, and haply, never wholly, perish in any soul. It declares that it is what we are, not what we possess or seem only, that constitutes our crown of excellence, incites to an incessant, moral, and intellectual initiative, as opposed to those direst and, in fact, only foes to human progress, namely — ignorance, apathy, superstition, and fanaticism, the denial of a soul in man, as of order and an Orderer in creation.

It urges the better, more elevated treatment of woman and of man, nobler, loftier, truer conceptions of nature and of God, the thorougher more perfect moralisation of literature, religion, science, art, and law ; in short, the unintermitted adoption and furtherance, so far as lies within the range of human life and action, of every sweet and pure and true and holy thing.

It insists that each great and good reality, the spiritual and the elevated in man, their nature and quality regarded, are alike, absolutely, in the unseen as in the seen life, on earth as in remotest heaven. It derides the imputation of criminality as attaching to belief or unbelief, and leading to the setting up of unreal imaginary crimes, urging, instead, the necessity of turning the entire attention of heart and soul to carrying out the will of the infinitely supreme and merciful God.

It shows that our mortality and our immortality are, in strictness, not two things, but things one and the same, in fact, part and parcel of each other ; that both are under one providential and ordering rule, and that the life of the soul, however it may be with the bodily life, when once initiated, can never end.

It everywhere sets forth that we have not fallen from some high estate, but that through the infinite mercy and goodness of our Creator, we are continually advancing, not to a lost, but a real Eden ; that we are,

indeed, of celestial birth and origin, very angels in embryo, nobles in disguise; that what we term death and destruction will be replaced by a renewed and higher life, and that as the Almighty has sent us hither, we shall, in brightest, dearest reality, return to Him again. In sum, the volume proclaims, incessantly, with all the power and energy of the author's soul, the blest, the celestial verities that men are brothers; that the Deity is our Father and our Friend, and as such it claims to be some instalment of the one, the true, the ever-enduring theology—the theology of the friends of God, the real, indeed, the only friends of man.

BELFAST, *April 27, 1877.*

CONTENTS.



	PAGE
PREFACE	vii
1. The Postulates of Existence	1
2. The Almighty Rules the World	3
3. We are to Work for, and with God	4
4. Where God is there also is Potential Heaven	5
5. The Life Invisible	8
6. God is our Redeemer	10
7. The Almighty is the Wellspring of all Goodness	11
8. We are Children of the Divine	12
9. Heaven is ever Nigh	13
10. A Celestial Providence subsists around	14
11. The Promise on the Face of the Dead	17
12. Divinest Gifts	18
13. To the Pure-Hearted all Heaven lies Open	20
14. Children are Gifts direct from Heaven	21
15. Our Earthly Companions	24
16. The Mighty Labourer	26
17. The Living World	28

	PAGE
18. Message of the Flowers	29
19. The Body	31
20. The Soul	33
21. Love shuts out Fear	36
22. Angelic Revelings	38
23. Woman	40
24. Self-Direction	42
2. Untiring Effort is the Cost of Excellence	44
26. Right Reason and a Right Faith are at One	47
27. The Absolute Needfulness of Culture	50
28. Man's Vast Endowment	53
29. We are Bound to Love each Other	55
30. Ceaseless Striving is the Cost of Liberty	57
31. The Freedom of Law	59
32. Death is a Divinest Ordinance	60
33. Self-Control	63
34. Self-Redemption	65
35. Thoroughness	68
36. The Final the Sufficing Cause	70
37. The Affections	72
38. Pleasure and Pain	74
39. The Origin of Ill	76
40. Integrity in Profession	79
41. Torture does not Conduct to God	84
42. Discipline	90
43. We Discern but Dimly	93

CONTENTS.

xv

	PAGE
44. The Divine Messages	95
45. Each Day is a Holy Day	98
46. Goodness is its own Supreme Reward	100
47. The Imitation of God	102
48. God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of Reason	107
49. Faith and Hope	110
50. The Divine Archetypes Subsist in God	112
51. Courtesy of Bearing	114
52. Substitution	117
53. Love	120
54. Supreme Wisdom Sustains the World	122
55. The Highest Excellence is to Obey the Lord	124
56. To know God is to Love Him	126
57. Supernaturalism	129
58. Duty	131
59. The Bow	133
60. Seekers after God	134
61. Genius	136
62. Immortality	138
63. The Sermon on the Mount	141
64. Yearnings after God	143

„Daß ich nicht auf Menschen baue, sondern auf den Gott in mir
und über mir.“—JEAN PAUL, *Titan*.

The Conversation of a Soul with God.

THE POSTULATES OF EXISTENCE.

THE knowledge and the imitation of God, indeed, are not two things, but one thing—the real, and, in short, only theology. In matters of religion, if not of science, we attach greatest moment to past utterances, look upon them as final, just as if heaven were not now at hand, and God Himself everywhere.

Life's brevity, the infinite obligations which we owe to truth, alike call upon us to replace each unreal fantastic notion with that more precious lore which affirms God's presence in every breast, and that one day He shall rescue and preserve us all.

We are not automatons, indeed, but intelligences, beings made up of thought and hope and love, qualities that endure for aye. Everything within us and around calls for action ceaselessly, in a word, duty, carrying belief into action, conformably with the celestial compact, which, to observe faithfully, is, in very truth, to compass Eden—the sure and certain Eden within the breast.

Phenomena have not within them the mainspring of their potencies, but are ever underlain by a supremest intelligence—an intelligence which is not for an instant, were it, intermitted or set aside. Science, as has been wisely said, may demonstrate organic structures, the sequences of phenomena ; but the soul, that something which is quite other than earth, mounts ever upwards and onwards to their only source and origin—to God.

To overlook a thinking principle in man, as apart from the organism, is indeed an error only less disastrous than not to recognise a soul in nature. The appreciation of one, and recognition of the other, are, in effect, twin necessities of thought, and inseparable. For matter, or what we so term, is nescient utterly ; and, whatever nihilistic speculation may assume, is incapable, wholly, of originating life or consciousness. How, indeed, upon the bastard supposition of a merely material universe, could we, for a moment even, assume to account for the unutterable perfection which subsists within us and around—a perfection devised and consummated by the Being who orders all things well ?

THE ALMIGHTY RULES THE WORLD.

WHEN words fail, Thy works, O Lord, proclaim Thy providence. Yes, the breath we draw, the thoughts we think, nay, each breath and every thought, the dear emotions of our hearts, the pulses of the world's existence, are alike upheld and maintained by Thee. Is it, then, even for an instant, to be imagined that the life unseen—that life which, in wondrous reality, subsists on every side around—is, in any respect, less wisely and worthily ordered than the seen ?

And yet this present existence, in all its essentials, is spiritual, is, at least might be, very heaven. In truth, there are no forces except spiritual forces. Matter, or what we so term, does not direct itself, but is directed through agencies invisible, O God, by Thee, and, so far as Thou hast permitted, as in the government of our frames and subjugation of nature, by us also. Otherwise, the thinking, directing principle in every living creature is, of strict necessity, spiritual.

WE ARE TO WORK FOR AND WITH GOD.

O MASTER, Father, Friend ! it is Thy manifest pleasure that, in our several measures, we should follow in Thy track—in a word, prove fellow-workers and co-operators with Thee. Whatever Thou wishest we should wish ; whatever Thou doest we, in our lesser degree, should do, or strive to do also.

Immeasurable God ! however immense the interval between man and Thee, the road which we have to travel is Thy road also. A little ingot, whether in name or nature, does not differ from a mass of gold, and the humblest service, were it faithfully and dutifully performed, is indeed divine, places us in instant relation with whatever is beautiful and good, makes us straight-way at one with loftiest heaven and with Thee. Who, then, should murmur or repine, seeing that even in this brief life, whatever be our position, or wherever our lot may be cast, we are suffered to do work the noblest, best, work meet for angels, the very sons and daughters of God ?

*WHERE GOD IS, THERE ALSO IS
POTENTIAL HEAVEN.*



WHEREVER Thou art, O Lord, and that is everywhere, is not only possible, but, if we strive sufficiently, also actual heaven. To feel and act up to this conviction is indeed, O God, to approve one's self Thy child. For heaven is the condition of the soul—is not a place merely—should subsist in the very heart of man. If it be not there, it is nowhere. For what indeed is heaven other than goodness, and faith, and hope, and love—a ceaselessly progressive intelligence, and, in short, realisation of the divine.

Heaven, then, is the sum of excellence ; it is the light of the Divine countenance, the very fulness of love. Potentially, it is around us ever, was so from the first, even as it is still. To know, O God, that, with each sweet and good and precious thing, Thou art indeed nigh, should steep the soul in perfect joy.

Yes, Thou art present in our daily walk. Go where we will, we are always with Thee. In heart and soul, in feeling and intelligence, Thou art in truth beside us ever. No friend or nearest relative, were it, is so

entirely at hand as Thou art. Conscious, only conscious of this, the captive in his dungeon need not feel solitary, nor the desert wanderer prove alone. In heaven, Thy heaven, O God, there is scope for all perfection, intelligence the most transcendent, the utmost goodness, the divinest love. O Father, Thou dost in Thyself resume all excellence, and to aim rightly at Thee is indeed to realise the fulness of joy. Thou, O Thou hast painted the satin cheek, the lily and the tinted rose, the clouds which attend the rising and setting sun, the glorious aurora, the overarching bow. Thou hast shed the violet and the rose's perfume, imparted its balmy breath to the child. Ah! Thou dost smile on all honest endeavour, fare alike with us in the calm current of daily existence, as in life's last throe. How, how indeed, are we to fit ourselves for heaven, that celestial world, prove meet associates for angels, Thy angels, O Lord, if only we cast aside each generous impulse, reject mercy and justice and truth and hope and purity and love?

Yes, Thou art indeed with us, dost summon us to Thy paradise incessantly, the paradise which is in us and around us, and whose gates are never closed. For there, there the angelic janitors forbid us not, but ever beckon us to enter in. They wave their silken pinions, as in sweetest accents they exclaim, Goodness, only goodness and singleness of heart, and innocence and truth—not opinion, not profession merely—are the needful pass-

ports here. For here, here there is neither soil nor sully, no rankling impurity may find room ; but, ah ! we shall experience, cannot indeed experience any brighter, sweeter, purer, loftier heaven than what we bring.

THE LIFE INVISIBLE.

WE long, O God, to know how and where and when we shall meet our darlings, those we so loved on earth, and, if only it might be, learn something of the future and the unseen. Ah ! did we but reflect, we should feel assurance that it is better as it is. This world, in truth, is a school, wherein, by the incessant conflict of sentiment and opinion, the calls of duty, the claims of literature, science, and art, the multitudinous moral and material incitements, the inflictions even to which we are subjected, Thou dost, in myriad fashions, O Lord, minister to our requirements ceaselessly. And yet the unseen life is not far from us. It is before, it is behind, it is on every side of us. In truth, it is in our very midst, as we are in the midst of it. Were the veil of the invisible indeed only once withdrawn, and the vast spiritual universe fully disclosed, our mundane activities and energies would almost certainly collapse, and the purposes of this earthly existence, as a preliminary arena for growth and development, be rendered virtually nugatory.

Man's intelligence must of necessity prove more or less at fault in respect of discerning the future and the

unseen, and yet the blessed feelings, the divine emotions and affections with which, O Lord, Thou hast so plentifully endowed us, one and all, as with trump and psaltery proclaim that, wrapped in the folds of Thy unrelaxing providence, everything must finally be well.

GOD IS OUR REDEEMER.

—o—

O God, Ruler of the immensities, all the infinities, indeed our Redeemer, our very Preserver and Stay, our not to be alienated, firm, fast Friend, in Thee is all knowledge, all truth, all beauty, all sweetness, all power, all excellence, all love. Charity of charities, Thou art the sum of charity, the wellspring of grace, the climax of tenderness and ever-compassionateness. Ah ! there is no dear affection of which Thou art not the source ; no sweet, or true, or beautiful, or holy thing which Thou dost not in Thyself resume ; and some time, according to our capacities and deserts, shalt resume and compass for us all. Thou Fountain of truth and light, redemption of redemptions, essence of essences, let the soul seek refreshment and renewal in Thee, find firm, fast hold in the deep conviction of Thy goodness, security absolute in the fulness of Thy love.

*THE ALMIGHTY IS THE WELLSPRING
OF ALL GOODNESS.*

O GOD, I know that I should be good and wise, a member of Thy kingdom, a keeper of Thy celestial law. And this, in the measure of my strength, I shall endeavour to become. For, O God, Thou art the sum of goodness, the fulness of every grace, and dost but ask us to aim at Thee. Be good, Thou dost whisper to each soul ceaselessly, be only good and wise. For to Thee, my creature and my child, have I indeed imparted the potentiality of all excellence, and, so far as thy capacity extends, the possible attainment of each true, and sweet, and holy thing.

Ah ! Lord, I do repent me of my many shortcomings, and henceforth shall hope to maintain a soul unstained. For goodness, Thy loving enduring goodness, dost as thus blot out every transgression, yield participation in that purity, short of which the golden gateway cannot open to us. Contrition, then, but contrition along with well-doing, is atonement, approaches us, O God, to Thy dear kingdom, and to Thee. With only goodness, pervasive actuating goodness, we come, at length, to exist in and for Thee, and life, each day and every day, is converted into very heaven.

WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE DIVINE.

O PRINCE of mercy, of justice, and of peace ! Thou art in truth our Father. Without Thee we should not exist, but perish. To Thee, in truth, do we owe our being, our powers, our every faculty. For each right feeling, lofty aspiring, elevated thought, to Thee, oh, to Thee, O Lord, are we indebted wholly. And through them, infinite Benefactor, dost Thou, indeed, enable us to imitate Thee, realise self-direction, the celestial privilege of doing well.

To aim at this, or were it but in part and fitfully, at each sweet, and pure, and holy thing, following out, O God, Thy law, is, in blest reality, to suffuse the soul with gleams of paradise, to approve one's self Thy child, in short, to compass very heaven.

For, indeed, Thou hast not made us to grovel, but to strive after, if not to realise, perfection. To develop worthily and well each noble gift, we feel and know is to honour Thee. Dull and lustreless, at first, man's spirit is as some shapeless gem. Yet, when skilfully handled, and made lustrous like the gem, the soul becomes replete with light and truth, attains to real excellence at last.

HEAVEN IS EVER NIGH.

O GOD most holy, God most provident, wise, and true !
Thou art ever with us, and, therefore, as thus, we are
never, never left alone. As for the men of the past, the
structures they have builded, the pictures they have
limned, the statues they have hewed, the books they
have written, the soils they have reclaimed, bring them,
if not directly, at least indirectly, close to hand. As
they have left, so are we too bound to leave this earth yet
better than we find it. But without Thee, O Lord, and
Thy indwelling presence, there would be no science, no
knowledge, nor any art or skill. For, in veriest truth,
Thou art with us ceaselessly, dost accompany us in all our
wayfarings, in life as in death alike. Yes, Thou art in
our very souls. We are indeed Thy creatures, beings
whom Thou hast evoked from nothingness, stamped with
Thy Spirit's impress, endowed with powers which can
experience no abiding degradation, no decay.

*A CELESTIAL PROVIDENCE
SUBSISTS AROUND.*

THY providence, O God, 'is not an intermitted providence, but one ever present, ever nigh. And yet it is, withal, a general providence, a providence that does not once interfere with those details which, in our unreadiness and unpreparedness, we fain would have Thy dear hand to modify afresh and control. It is now some winters back when two young persons—brother and sister they were—sought their distant dwelling across a mountain slope in Derry. The way was far, the night was dark and chill, the wild winds blew, and the rains fell, so that, utterly worn out and exhausted, the two young creatures laid them down and died. It was observed, however, by those who next day went in search and traced out the poor remains, that the girl, before expiring, had taken off her little shawl to wrap round the boy, whose chilled hands she had further thrust into her bosom. Not far from this, and on another hill, I, not long since, had occasion to pass a row of hovels. "Yes," said my informant, pointing to a roof that had fallen in, and walls which were black and discoloured, "that was the house. The children, four in

all, perhaps to ~~keep~~ them from a contiguous precipice, or out of the way of horned cattle, had been locked in when the elders went to toil. The dwelling, it was never well known how, took fire. I could not," she continued, "at first imagine whence the screams issued, and when at length I reached the burning dwelling, the door was fast. Presently, however, it was dashed open, and then the children's charred limbs were found huddled up in one corner, the oldest of the innocents outside, as if in vain endeavour to shield the rest from the flames." Ah, God, my God! didst Thou ever interfere, surely, surely, it would be in cases such as these.

There are, indeed, some who would assert that there is no design and no Designer, no provision and no Provider. Alas! they know not what they say. As well might we affirm there was no mother's surpassing fondness, no father's fostering care, that no sun shines, or flower of glorious excellence decks this our natal earth. Not words, indeed, but objects themselves, the glittering stars and many-peopled earth, above all, man's bright intelligence, the heart's glorious affections, recite continually Thy unrelaxing providence, O God, Thy unfaltering tenderness and love.

O Lord! the living frame with its immense perfections and infinite adaptations, the vast universe about, are full of Thy might, yield exhaustless traces of Thy all pervasive purposes. What verbal utterance, in truth,

could be more declaratory than is creation itself of Thy divinest will, Thy consummate wisdom, Thy never interrupted adjustments ! No, not if every hand should wield a pen, write day and night for ever, could hand or pen recite the wonders of design, the multiplied evidence of Thy unutterably solicitous forethought and care. Ah ! language itself, Thy prodigious gift, O Lord, were all too insufficing to detail, our intelligence too restricted to take in were it the merest outline of Thy immense activities, the illimitable scope of the things thou hast done.

*THE PROMISE ON THE FACE OF
THE DEAD.*



DEAR LORD, I saw recently, lying lifeless, supine, one who but a little previously had been a living, breathing woman, one long of sound intelligence bereft. The victim, otherwise of widely extended bodily disease, her organisation had given way utterly. Restless, disquieted as death drew nigh, she demeaned herself as one determined not to yield. Her little sum of strength, however, ebbed fast away, and soon the poor corpse lay still, exanimate.

Her face was calm ; ah, so calm and serene ! The loveliness of death, all the peace of heaven, were there. The parted soul had in truth been made whole. And thus shalt Thou, in the coming life, O God, by Thy appointed means, without colour of doubt or hesitancy, reintegrate and perfect each perverted, shattered intelligence, nor suffer want or deficiency, much more sin or soil, to afflict it any more.

DIVINEST GIFTS.

How multifarious are Thy benefactions, O Lord, to man! Thou hast imparted to him, if not actual language, at any rate the capacity to originate and perfect it. Along with this immeasurably precious endowment, Thou hast further bestowed on him, but conditioned by effort, right-ful well-directed effort, the power of developing his celestially imparted faculties, and a wondrous insight as well.

The supreme, however, and mightiest gift of all, resides in the capacity of aiming at, and more or less realising, whatever is great and good and wise and true ; in fine, of participating, O God, in Thy intelligence, and, to however restricted an extent, of imitating thee.

In the feelings and affections, those feelings and affections which so mould the very features that the impress becomes well-nigh divine, Thou dost not only compass a miracle the most precious, but also render us in a measure akin to the angels themselves. For there is heaven, so to speak, in the glancing eye and winning smile, the sum of all sweetness in the waving hair and head which it adorns, the moulded throat, the setting

of the ear, the mobile nostril, the brow, the sheltering eyelash, what do I say? the neck, breast, in short, the entire form, with its exhaustless wealth of grace and majesty, climax, indeed, and completion of the whole.

*TO THE PURE-HEARTED ALL HEAVEN
LIES OPEN.*



O God most holy ! purity not only approaches us to Thy angels, but raises us, in whatever finite measure, towards Thee. And yet, how can man's heart be fitly uplifted, or the soul as thus brought nigh, so long as life's just relations are looked at through a medium which assumes—most erroneously and untruthfully assumes—to look upon them as degraded and impure.

Ah ! if only it could be, would that men, all men, should soar on seraph's wings, so that, borne aloft by bright desire, they might at length realise in all its precious fulness that fair estate wherein naught but love and truth and purity hold sway.

*CHILDREN ARE GIFTS DIRECT FROM
HEAVEN.*

IN virtue of Thy infinite, Thy inconceivable goodness, O God, Thou hast bestowed offspring on man. What, oh ! what would be the world without a child—a child, incarnation of Thy grace, impersonation of the very sweetness and ecstasy of heaven !

In virtue of the helpless dependence, the indescribable beauty, the celestial innocence, purity, and truth of childhood, Thou dost indeed realise in us and for us an angelic life. In our solicitude for children, Thou dost endow us with a measure of Thy attributes. In commerce with them we renew our very being ; while in training their nascent faculties, guiding their feelings and affections, developing their intelligence up to man's glorious dignity, woman's transcendent worth, we do for them what Thou in Thy grander measure dost compass, and, in truth, potentially realise for us all.

O God of excellence, fountain of every refinement ! the infant is just an overflowing of Thy goodness, an epitome of Thy not to be exhausted tenderness and love. How wondrous, in truth, is its consummate

sweetness ; how infinitely does it not elicit a mother's fondness, a father's heartfelt care ! And, oh ! when we come to lose one, it is as if a portion of our very soul were rent away. We feel, know indeed, that Thou dost provide for all children ; that they go to make up Thy paradise—the paradise that awaits us all. And yet it needs our utmost faith, our entirest reliance, O God, on Thee, to reconcile, were it but in part, our hearts to the, in fact, intolerable pang of their removal.

Yes ; a child, O God, is a revealing of Thy tenderness, the realisation, if but a portion—and yet what a portion—of the Divine, the unutterable to come.

We are all Thy dependants, O Lord ; but the infant is our dependant also—is a gift to love with love unspeakable—a gift to rescue from all foulness and baseness and sin—a gift to rear in purity absolute, purity without limit or stint or stain. The infant, in truth, declares its celestial origin and destiny from the first—proclaims in every limb and feature Thy ineffable goodness, Thy boundless, illimitable power.

If only we would reflect, we should indeed see that each several child, with all its divinely imparted possibilities and susceptibilities, comes direct, a very angel, O God, from Thee. There is no essential difference, either, in regard of their supreme capacities and endowments, between the offspring of prince and peasant, freedman or slave, savage or civilised man. All, all—would only that they were reared conformably—are

princes and nobles alike. And I would repudiate, abhor, and with my utmost energies condemn, the halting, faulty culture, were it but of a single soul, on any pretext or ground whatever. For the infant, seed and pabulum of humanity, is also the world's very hope and stay; and any laches or shortcoming by it, in respect of the amplest, most sufficing development of body and soul, so far as is given us to realise it, is criminal in Thy sight, O Lord, treason to highest Heaven.

OUR EARTHLY COMPANIONS.

O FATHER, Friend most mighty ! Thou hast given us companions, beings with impulses, passions, and emotions like our own, and with them the multitudinous amenities that flow from love, friendship, and combined action. By means of language and other devices, indeed, those who are remote in space, if not in time, hold commerce almost as completely as if at hand.

It is incumbent on us, in truth, by every means at our disposal, to enhance that commerce, to bring each desirable, accessible thing within the grasp of all. How much more fittingly, then, would not men be enabled, O God, to appreciate and adore Thee ; how vastly would it not enlarge their sphere of life and action, as well as almost infinitely benefit their associates and their kind !

Love, and holiness, and purity, and truthfulness, with all capacity—in fine, each and every spiritual faculty—are sister qualities, hold closest affinity with each other. They exalt man's entire nature, enhance his usefulness, and, above all, permit him, O God, to commune with, and, in his finite measure, to realise by imitating Thee.

Wars, murders, all brutalities, each and every outrage

and crime—in short, whatever dreadful soil or debasement as yet afflicts the world—owe no cause or origin other than incompleteness ; in a word, the insufficing, misdirected culture of body and soul. If only we would avail ourselves adequately of our vast potential resources, turn to account the immense facilities and working aids which modern times afford, there would be, approximately, little preventable disease or suffering, no incompetence or aimless bungling, no poverty or material destitution, few or no idiots or insane persons, and, O God of light and mercy ! haply neither sin nor soil.

If, indeed, we do not strive manfully, how are we to compass any excellence ? Thou hast, O mighty God, imparted to us angelic faculties and capacities, faculties and capacities cultivable, and to be cultivated, not in the few only, but in all. For as certainly as the light shines, there are living, breathing germs of goodness placed effectively within the reach of every soul—in truth, a possible perfection and completeness, at which we are severally bound to aim, as the lodestone aims at the pole, and we all should aim at heaven.

THE MIGHTY LABOURER.

THOU, O God, art in truth the Mighty Labourer, working day and daily, and always, without pause, ceaselessly. Thou dost labour—it is Thy divinest pleasure to do so—for the benefit of the whole. Unless when actuated by lofty motives, we are overcome readily. Where man indeed slumbers, Thou, O God, slumberest not, but dost strive and toil for ever.

Does any one imagine only that the elements combine of themselves to produce the illimitably varied forms, the grace, the beauty, in short, the divine perfection which it so transports us to behold—let him know that there is One at whose command being, and shape, and form, in fine, every quality, all capacity, originate wholly. Man, in truth, is bound to be a fellow-worker, O God, with Thee, and, within the range of his powers, to strive ceaselessly. Happily, however, it is the law of his being, as well as the necessity of his position, more or less to do so, else indeed he would perish miserably.

And yet, labour, seeing that the toiler in his degree is Thy associate, O God, is not sufficiently honoured. Victimised by neglect, rendered thereby prone to every

low, debasing error and vile addiction, the labourer only too often is left to grovel in the slough. Yes, labour properly directed and adjusted, is the very safeguard and solace of the world. In effect, its conditions, all of them, should be exalted, so that each man, as he began his daily toil, might feel, know, he was a fellow-striver, O God, with Thee, occupying, as thus, a lofty sphere, discharging a very angel's part, and that labour itself, in dear reality, was divine.

THE LIVING WORLD.

THOU hast not only, O God, yielded us companions of our own species, but further, in a measure, bestowed upon us the winged creatures of air, the denizens of forest and field, the vast insect world, the inmates of the mighty deep ; one and all, their several positions and work regarded, of inconceivable perfection, grace, and excellence. Conceptions of Thy creative intelligence, products of Thy plastic hand, they are indeed various, and yet of types unchangeable as the very stars of heaven. How lovely is the bird, how angelic, ravishing all hearts with its melody, not instructed by man, in truth, but only, dear God, by Thee. Then, consider those other creatures, the generous horse, the wondrous camel, the friendly dog, the gentle sheep, the mighty elephant, marvellous after their kind, of transcendent usefulness to man. But the wonder of wonders as connected with them is, that they are not mere automatons, skilfully constructed machines, but severally and collectively animated by a spiritual principle, imparted, O God, by thee, as well as further directed by an intelligence that is wholly extrinsic to themselves.

MESSAGE OF THE FLOWERS.

O God of all mercy, God full of sweetest compassionateness and truth ! flowers are among Thy more precious gifts, indeed Thy very especial revealings. What grace, oh ! what unspeakable purity, tenderness, and refinement, do they not one and all display ? Is there, indeed, throughout creation, anything that shall transcend the lily or the rose, not to speak of I know not what other exquisite flowers ? Gems of surpassing loveliness, their exhalations, O Lord, are of the aroma of paradise, emanations, O Creator of the flowers from Thee.

Sweet incense allies itself with the glories of sound, music's gush, the summer wind across the lea, the beauty of women and children, as well as with the entrancing perfection of the flowers themselves. Is there, indeed, in heaven itself, anything that shall surpass the odour of the honeysuckle or the lemon-grass, the scent of the verbena and wallflower, the perfume of the blossoming bean ?

These essences, in truth, are exquisite as are the flowers, and both, one as much so as the other, O Spirit of Truth and Purity, display Thy sweetness, Thy ineffable tenderness, Thy unutterable skill and power.

Yes; the ravishing distilments which the blossoms exhale, reveal not more surely the source from which they spring, than they enforce the glad conviction that now and ever it must fare well with us, and that one day we shall attain to that dear region where these, Thy divinest fragrances, O Lord, are at home.

THE BODY.

O GOD, Thou hast clothed our souls in bodies as in a garment, bodies not less admirable in construction than in their subservience to the various purposes for which they are designed. Formed of but a few ingredients taken from the waters, the soil, and the ambient atmosphere, these ingredients are displaced and replaced ceaselessly. Ever changing in aspect as in reality, the living frame is as thus renewed and preserved in a condition of marvellous availability in respect of our ever-varying wishes and requirements.

The body, indeed, not only gets rid of used-up particles, but redeposits others instead, selected from a mixed fluid, the blood, exactest analogues of those that are taken away. These things, O God, are done by Thee—are among the several incidents of birth, growth, and decay. In other respects the body, which we are led to look upon as so much our own, is distinct and separate from the soul. It is subject, when the soul is severed from it, to all the laws of matter, and perishable utterly, whereas the soul itself obeys the laws of spirit, endures, in truth, for ever.

In the inferior animals the anterior extremities are

little better than instruments of progression, whereas in man they have been made directly subservient to the higher uses of the intelligence. How wondrously indeed do hand and arm address themselves to the exercise of every art. How perfectly are the organs of utterance adjusted to voice and song, the features to flash forth quick intelligence and emotion, those supreme emotions which liken us to angels, and further, O God, our access to Thee !

THE SOUL.

DIVINEST Master ! Thou hast not only gifted us with a body but a soul also, a principle capable of reflection and self-cognisance, and, further, competent to look up to and adore Thee. In very truth, the soul itself is the man. **Almighty Being !** in this as in all things nature is full of Thy revealings. Thy most noble economy is everywhere to be seen. It is indeed our highest privilege to discern Thee at once in creation, as in the Spirit's inward workings, to rely fully on Thy truth, most firmly to confide in Thy all-sufficing will.

Ah, my soul ! it needs no loud-voiced menace or bitter invective to incite to knowledge divine. Thou art yet more willing, O God, to be known than we are to know Thee. And this knowledge it is which goes to make up the mighty interval that severs man from brute ; for the brute knows not God, nor death, nor immortality, while man has been constituted for the lofty appreciation of all three.

With what versatile capacities hast Thou not in truth endowed us ; how unspeakably improvable is not the human spirit ; with what readiness and spontaneity does not the well-developed intelligence respond to

every call ! As each several raindrop reflects the so, cultured, purified, disciplined, and perfected, m soul, to however limited and partial an extent, is a reflection, O Father, of Thee. For sweetness and gness, and gentleness and probity, and purity and tr in sum all excellence, are of necessity alike in e heaven. Ah ! no just thought or manly aspiring is cherished in vain, but, circling through the imme ties, proves—must needs prove—a grace and a glory ever.

Yes ; the soul, the soul, is of price beyond price ; session of possessions, it is emphatically the princ that thinks and feels and loves ; and, potency over potencies, becomes capable, O Lord, of appreciating imitating Thee. We cannot—no we cannot, were it a moment—conceive how Thou hast originated and fected this so glorious thing.

O God ! there is neither foothold, nor security, advancement except through Thee, and with Thee, in Thee. To aim at Thee ceaselessly is, in sum, the keeping and glorification of the world. Of all ea occupants, man is Thy immensest creation. He a feels—knows that Thou art God, and that his i existence which never ends. But, O Lord, Lord of refinement, all sweetness, all goodness, all truth ! v hast Thou not bestowed upon us ? Not only thought feeling, and conscience and judgment, and hope, faith, and love, but, further, the celestial facult

seeking after and realising Thee ; the divine capacities of poesy and music and song—poesy and music and song wherewith to hymn, O God, Thy immeasurable perfections, the wealth of nature and of art, the excellence of perfected womanhood, the majesty of self-respecting, variously-developed man.

Ah ! God, Thou hast imparted revealings, intuitions of the infinite, glimpses of blest realities, things as yet not clearly seen. Man Thou hast made potentially an angel, and this, his dwelling in space and time, in truth a potential heaven. Chastened, cultured, elevated, in fine, pervaded by every sweetest sympathy, obeying Thy law, aiming ceaselessly at Thee, man's soul becomes haply, at last, itself divine, fitted in whatever finite measure to occupy Thy paradise, O God of gods, to abide with and imitate Thee.

LOVE SHUTS OUT FEAR.

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JOHN, the Christian apostle, with celestial emphasis and sweetness, has said, There is no fear in love, and perfect love casteth out fear. If love, O God, exclude fear, why should any one ask us to fear Thee. It is not fear, then, but love, which is the beginning and the end of all wisdom. And love it is which, with reason, ought alone to actuate every relation, human and divine.

Love, in truth, is the antithesis of fear ; for while fear is base and low, love is elevated, glorious, sublime. One prostrates us to earth, whereas the other exalts to lofty heaven. Fear, vile, grovelling fear, alas ! is the curse and scourge of our kind, excludes love, hinders, in fact arrests, spiritual development. And therefore it is we should not fear, but only love Thee, O Lord ; for love, perfect love, love to thee, O God, includes highest excellence, progress, courage, firmness, reliance, and fixed resolve.

I do not here advert to the love of man for man only, of parent for child, or even the affection between the sexes, but to that yet more noble emotion which, haply, resumes and perfects them all. The real sin against the great Spirit, then, is not to love enough.

It is indeed the only sin ; for how can he sin who truly loves God ? To love Him is to believe in Him, sums up all goodness—is, in short, the one thing needful—in truth, most needful, whether as regards this life or the life unseen. For if only, O God of excellence, we love Thee enough, we shall believe enough, prove instant enough, in the realisation of every rightful, gracious, and holy thing. In such case, no day, no life, will seem too long for what we have to compass. And when the night, or what to our imperfect apprehension so seems, approaches, we shall feel, know, that Thou, O Lord, dost close our eyes, take us by the hand, lead us to a realm of duties haply more exalted, and, if such be possible, to a yet more perfect love.

ANGELIC REVEALINGS.

THY revealings, O God of mercy and of truth, are at hand ceaselessly. They are not confined to one period or to a few only, but subsist amidst, as they have ever subsisted, embrace as they have ever embraced, the entire family of our kind. Ah ! Thou dost declare Thyself in every plant, in every flower, the rising and setting stars, the tender infant's nascent smile, the weltering ocean, the falling dew. Thou art indeed present in light as in darkness, in the peopled city, as in the sere and silent waste. In busiest life Thou art ever with us, nor art Thou absent at the last hour.

But Thy revealings, O God, so full, ah so full of trust, and truth, and faith, and sweetness, and love, are not confined to outer things. They abound in every heart. They are found in the utterances of the good and wise, the words of saintly women and godlike men. They are heard in the child's ringing accents, the cheery voice of honest labour, the deep communings of affection. There is not, in truth, a gracious act or work of sacrifice on this many-peopled earth in which Thy divinest effluence, O God of mercy and of love, is not ceaselessly and unfailingly displayed.

To further translate these, Thy revealings, into action, lofty thoughts, devoted deeds, is the essential need of every soul. Thou dost address us in language truly, not in one, but every tongue, in every science, and in every art. Yes ; for it comes to this: we are to be gathered into Thy heaven at last. Each truest formulary of celestial law appeals alike to the understanding and the heart. For, O God, Thou dost speak not to one, but both, dost hold discourse—not with a single individual or a few only, but, and in sweetest, purest, most emphatic accents, with the entire family of our kind.

O Lord of Lords, Thy declarations subsist everywhere, are meant to find an echo in every breast. Ah ! there is not a spirit which they will not one day actuate, a soul which shall not attain some time to that bright platform, the broad and fair arena on which Thy love and Thy law, perforce, must for ever hold sway.

W O M A N.

GOD of all goodness, all mercy, all truth ! not only hast thou bestowed upon us fathers, brothers, friends, but woman also, divinest of Thy divine gifts. For woman is the sum, I do not say of all potential, but, humanly speaking, the highest expression of all actual sweetness, tenderness, and love. How precious, how inestimable—man's greatest discovery, in truth—is her surpassing excellence and worth !

Without woman this world would be a howling waste. Her taste refines, her truth exalts the entire life of man. Each several woman is, in fact, the possible incarnation, if not completest realisation, of every pure, and sweet, and holy thing. But, then, it is woman as elevated, ennobled, and perfected by truest insight, the thoroughest culture—culture at once intellectual, moral, and material, as well as the most persistent well-doing. Excellence in one sex, in effect, does not differ in essentials from excellence in the other, and therefore it is that, short of some affluent measure of living pervasive intelligence and working worth, the individual woman falls necessarily short, does not

adequately realise her lofty position as wife, daughter, mother, sister, companion, friend.

Ah ! those divinest capabilities with which, O Lord, Thou hast so richly endowed her, are not done adequate justice to, her prodigious latent intelligence is left mainly incult and fallow, and she becomes, sadly too often, the victim of base oppression, nay, every vile degrading thing. For, without culture—culture the amplest, most varied, of body, heart, and soul—how is woman—and here I mean every woman—to become, O Lord, Thy child ? how is she sufficingly to realise the absolute needfulness of sustained moral and intellectual effort, much more hold her own as partner and coequal of man—equal and yet so different—as parent, teacher, and protectress of our kind ?

Her soul, so receptive of excellence, should in truth be tilled as a very garden of God, rendered the living actual embodiment of every grace, each bright celestial thing. Her intelligence and heart, initially by her guardians and protectors, subsequently through her own efforts, ought, indeed, to be developed to the uttermost. Thus, and thus only, can she become, I do not say or mean man's rival, but his counterpart and conjux, as the thumb is to the hand, for so Providence most surely directs and intends, the beautifier of life, guardian angel on the road to paradise, in fine, the instructress, solace, and elevator of our race.

SELF-DIRECTION.

THROUGH Thy limitless mercies, O Lord, our species has been endowed with a most noble intelligence, capacities of next to infinite diversity, as also a sensory apparatus of simply ravishing perfection and excellence. Sensation, intuition, imagination, feeling, hast Thou all bestowed, along with reason to ordain and co-ordain—in short, intellectual and moral capabilities which, developed, strengthened, and extended, are, haply, not impaired by age, and, very certainly, are not extinguished by death.

Thou hast further, O Master, gifted us with a very wide range of selection and personal direction—in short, with the angelic alternatives of doing ill or well. These, our faculties, whether of body or mind, Thy most ineffable endowment, are enhanced and perfected by well-directed effort, and injured, if not destroyed, by indolence, apathy, misdirection, and abuse. Indeed, the habit of energetic self-guidance, for any lengthened period, or even any avoidable period at all, it is not safe, on any pretext, to forego. The direction, misnamed spiritual, that would assume to supersede the celestial faculty of self-direction, is quite unworthy of

the name ; for self-direction it is which, with ceaseless culture, and whatever friendly aid and sympathy, enables man to guide himself, permits him, at however infinite an interval, O Lord and Master, to follow Thy most glorious lead.

Our various endowments, however relatively limited and partial in their outcome at first, become, with care and effort, equal to every emergency at last. The difference that, in this respect, subsists between the competent and incompetent, the ready and the unready—in short, the capable and the incapable—is, in truth, simply indescribable.

It is Thy clearest purpose, then, O Lord, that we should courageously persist in the exercise of every faculty, the culture of those diverse capacities and most divine affections which, in fact, constitute the essential basis of our higher nature. For thus alone can we compass access to the better life, arrive at real excellence—in fine, become relatively fitted for that ulterior existence to which, guided and directed as we are, it is our immortal privilege to aspire.

*UNTIRING EFFORT IS THE COST OF
EXCELLENCE.*



OUR excellencies, O Supreme Master of our destinies, however they fall short, are, nevertheless, in principle and in essence, akin to Thine. For as the minutest fragment of some precious jewel is still precious, still a jewel, so every sincere striving after goodness and perfection, however vacillating and uncertain at first, gains strength and firmness by persistency, and, with only unflinching constancy, is sure to land us in loftiest heaven at last.

I do not mean to say there should be no rest, no pause ; for rest and pause are needful absolutely. But what I would urge is, that, short of unswerving effort, no surpassing excellence is realised or realisable. Effort, no doubt, becomes more facile with effort ; and yet, even then, without effort, further effort, strenuous and persistent effort, no really effective consummation is possible. Yes ; passiveness and inertia are simply death to the soul which harbours them. Quietism and mysticism, under certain aspects so fascinating and attractive, are tainted with these fatal cankerspots, so greatly at variance with moral health and life, and all

their serious virile obligations. Stoicism, itself, with its bear and forbear, replete as it is with many a celestial truth, is also all too passive. To bear and to forbear are doubtless often necessary, but not to bear, and not to forbear, are also just as frequent moral requirements. Christianity, even, though it may profess so to do, does not readily—and most rightly too—always turn the cheek to the smiter. This life's work, any more than the life of the mighty universe, cannot, indeed, be carried on by sleeping angels or with folded arms. We must be as well as do, do as well as be. To be quiet, at least in the sense of the Quietists, is, in a sense, to die. To be up and doing, alike here or hereafter, is to live, and, in so far, to resemble our divine Exemplar. When we have done our very best, and can do no more, it is time enough to be quiet, but assuredly not until then. No striving can well be deemed excessive when calculated, as all right effort is calculated, to promote the elevation and purification of souls, immunity from the mists of ignorance, superstition, and error, with final and absolute severance from every vile, unholy, base-born thing.

Apathy and indolence prove fatal at once to the individual and the race—are, in fact, the bane and desolation of our kind. Vainly, vainly does the heart which aims passively at goodness sigh after God. True aspiration and true effort, faith and works, charity and love, those coursers of the stars, run ever in harness

together. The humility that takes up with ignorance, and dirt, and sloth, and incapacity, is humble indeed. Holiness and dirt, whether of soul or body, are not allies. Be humble, if you will, and humbleness well beseems us in face of our immortal goal, but withal strive. Not a few, but many virtues should be aimed at ; not one, but various excellence. Strive, only strive, oh ! you who would approach God or compass foothold in paradise. Ah me ! what hosts have passed their days in aimless, purposeless austerities, who, with persistent well-doing, might well have achieved some far higher level.

I am far, very far, from intending to urge that knowledge, or even effort, is the great all in all ; for, short of goodness, knowledge is very poor ; but, coupled, only coupled, with goodness, knowledge and ability yield precious insight, become, as it were, right hands to excellence, cull the golden fruitage of eternity. With these—ah ! only with these—goodness comes to wear the jewelled crown. And thus it is, a poor worker or watcher by the sick, some mariner at the midnight helm, the sky above him populous with stars, the glittering ocean before his prow, bravely sustaining every infliction and privation, is, in essentials, a very prince and king, a consort meet for angels, and fit for any heaven.

*RIGHT REASON AND A RIGHT FAITH
ARE AT ONE.*



THE immoral and pernicious doctrine that faith is separable from reason, the best efforts of the intelligence dissociate from things divine, has, alas ! been widely promulgated. Thus an unreal, supposititious standard of right and wrong—in a word, profession in lieu of principle, imaginings instead of realities—has been set up. And yet truth, Thy truth, O Parent of truth and mercy ! is not only congruous with highest reason, but demands the exercise of that reason implicitly. For reason, all the reason we possess, like faith and charity, and hope and love, is indeed divine, needs not merely occasional, but unceasing application and development. Full well is theological empiricism aware of its utter inability to confront reason, nothing, therefore, is more unceasing than are its denunciations of this celestial gift of highest Heaven.

Reason, and trust, and truth, then, are in no wise at variance, but in strictest, happiest accordance with each other. Faith, at least all right faith, is in perfect consonance with man's highest intelligence, and bound to meet its requirements absolutely. A real faith, near-

ness, O God, to Thee, demands not profession only, but the fullest assent of the perfected understanding as well. For faith, a true faith, and right reason, are ever in closest alliance ; nor can faith, any faith short of doing violence to all high principle, ask from reason concessions which reason, at least cultured reason, finds it impossible to yield.

I know that we are liable to err, but involuntary error, whatever religious, or more strictly irreligious, dogmatism may aver, assuredly is no crime. And it is simply an outrage against Thy divinest providence, O Lord, to gainsay the exercise of reason, of a principle which, when united with untiring beneficence and goodness of heart, approximates us to Thy angels and to Thee.

Infinite Friend, O Father, Guardian, Stay ! without implicit faith in Thee, but a faith grounded on intelligence and love, what should we become or whither should we go ? For I am not my own, O Lord, but Thine, Thy creature and creation absolutely. Faith in Thee ; but a reasoned and a reasoning faith, Thou One and Only God, I feel, know, is essential to the moral spiritual life. I did not come here ; I was brought. I do not of myself depart ; I am sent. Whatever I am or have is Thine, O Lord, Thy divinest loan. We are Thy humble, most humble, followers and dependants, and Thou wilt not suffer us, any of us, to perish. Faith, then, unfaltering, unswerving faith, but

faith and reason conjoint and coupled, is above all possessions desirable ; that for which we are to work and strive, and without which we are as nothing, nothing.

Want of faith, a reasoned faith, it is which ruins and desolates the world, perishes the dear, fond heart of man. For with faith, only faith, an understanding, intelligent faith, in Thy untiring goodness, Thy unfailing mercies, Thy ceaseless presence, Thy all-embracing and celestial love, O God, there would be few or no political or religious lunacies, no bitterest enmities, no wars, no sorrowful moral shortcomings, or murderous crime. We should be unto each other as very brothers, indeed incarnate angels, pursuing with all possible diligence an infinite hope on this our common road to the one pervasive heaven.

*THE ABSOLUTE NEEDFULNESS OF
CULTURE.*



OH! merciful and compassionate God, each man hast Thou indeed made a possible angel, a being without taint, or stain, or flaw. For thus, in truth, hast Thou created him. There is no inherited or prenatal pravity either—none, no, none. The white lily, the untrodden snow, are not purer, fairer, in every rightful spiritual sense, than is the new-born babe. It is, in short, a simple question of psychological truth, and determinable as such. Those who affirm man's inherent wickedness cannot be adequately persuaded, O Lord, of Thy unfaltering tenderness, Thy unflagging, steadfast love.

A not-to-be-exhausted capacity for excellence subsists, indeed, in every breast, wherever, O God, Thou hast seen fit to plant our kind. It is a great, a not-to-be-evaded, duty, then, to yield to every, yes every, child, the best and brightest culture that it is in anywise possible to impart—a culture, in fine, which is in perfect accordance with the celestial destinies, and next to unlimited capacities of our race. To fall short in this

respect is to be guilty of treason to our species, is an infraction of the clearest rights of man.

The faculties, all our faculties, need discipline and development; but the heart, that soil of heaven, demands a more especial care. Instructors, the brightest, ablest, best, should alone be selected for the momentous task of preparing human beings worthily to occupy earth, and fitly inherit heaven. It is a miserable shortcoming to rear up men as if there were no hereafter, and not less so to be unmindful of the infinite obligations which attend them here.

If, indeed, there be a sacred duty on earth, it is that of the teacher, for heart, and soul, and body alike require his fostering care. It is not mere intellectual puppets or sectarian drivellers that the world needs, but sanely and wholesomely-reared men and women—men and women with sound minds, healthy feelings, and quick intelligence. To train the affections to the detriment of the understanding, the understanding to the prejudice of the heart, is to perpetuate moral deformities alike unfitted for this life's serious purposes and the presumable requirements of the great beyond.

Instruction—but instruction ever various, ever good, not made, cut and dry, to one pattern—should be so adjusted as to yield the broadest immediate and prospective scope, to permit every one to take a correct moral and intellectual initiative, intelligently to control nature, promote the exercise of all the nobler affections—in

short, develop to the uttermost our truest best humanity. By such culture, and such culture only, and as thus approaching Him, can men and women become able to honour their Creator, qualify themselves for the rightful discharge of present obligations and duties to come.

MAN'S VAST ENDOWMENT.

O God, Thou hast not endowed us meanly; hast, indeed, imparted capabilities which, when fittingly developed, raise us to some parity with angels, approximate us, at whatever unutterable interval, to Thy mighty Self. But, then, it involves effort—ceaseless, self-reliant, persistent effort—else we need not try to aim at, much more to realise, Thee.

The infant man, in respect of every wholesome desirable initiative, has of necessity to depend on others—those who, so far, at least, as it is delegated to humanity to prove so, must be to him, for a time at least, a sort of living visible providence. And thus, like the rich soil, which, duly laboured, tilled, and seed-strewn, responds to the hopes and wishes of the husbandman, should souls—Thy souls, O Lord—be brought, at length, to compass harvests of real excellence. But culture, training, education—name them as we will—require to be such, absolutely, as to insure spontaneous rightful action and individuality, so as, if only it may be, to incite to ceaseless effort the slumbering seraph that lodges in every breast. Ah! God, no crystal is brighter, clearer, no marble whiter, no lily purer, fairer, than is

the soul which conforms to Thy law, fashions i
noblest outline that inward image—the image of T
self—which is to experience one day its crowning c
plement and completion in heaven.

WE ARE BOUND TO LOVE EACH OTHER.

O God, fountain of tenderness, every purity, and joy, we are Thy children. Men, all men, in truth, are brothers, not only in virtue of earthly ties, but likewise, O Father, through Thee. What, then, must we say of those who destroy each other with the savage engineery of war, or, more deliberately, with the hangman's halter, the cruel knife, or yet more merciless stake? Outrages, the most revolting, are daily inflicted on loving women, tender children, unoffending men, helpless animals—outrages that make the blood run cold—breaches of that divinest comity which, as Thou knowest, O Prince of mercy and of peace, we are bound to display towards all animated kind—outrages which are alone ascribable to the saddening ignorance of things divine in which we suffer our innocents to be reared.

It is we—we, O Lord—who neglect these innocents, and who, in dread reality, are guilty of their shortcomings. Would, oh! would, only that they were nurtured wisely and well, and in the strictest observance of Thy celestial law. Then, then indeed, we might deck the murderous scaffold with flowers, cast down the lofty battlement, plant pot-herbs in the mouldering

fosse! Nations, in truth, have no real quarrel with each other; and, brothers in name, men might also prove so in blest reality.

Let there, then, if we will, be armies, but armies of beneficence, led by captains of industry, persons of consummate genius and resource, issuing forth with trump and drum, indeed, not to slay their fellows, but to reclaim the waste, re-edify dwellings, instruct the ignorant, reform the erring and debased, converting the world not into an arena of desolation, but the abode of self-respecting, law-and-order-abiding men and women, rightly assured, O Lord, of Thy dear approval here, as of the glad reversion of a reign of equity, and goodness, and truth for ever and for ever to come.

*CEASELESS STRIVING IS THE COST OF
LIBERTY.*



I FEEL, know, O God, that unwearying effort is the price of liberty, all liberty, the liberty of thinking and doing justly and well—in short, of acting conformably with the dictates of Thy divinest law. In very truth, it is the only liberty, marching, as thus, with unflinching directness, in the track of a well-ordered life, each daily task pursued unfalteringly, all needless distractions shunned, and side issues left for ever aside.

A career of real usefulness, then—not one, but many uses, persevered in with catholic insistency, neither narrowed to a point, nor left in the vagueness of some ill-defined aspiring—is our very greatest need. We require intensity of purpose, a real, not a simulated, energy, in thought, conception, and in deed. No perfectly good or worthy thing was ever achieved by indolence and sloth. To the energetic, the thoughtful, and the good alone belongs the world. How, indeed, are we to enter into Thy life, O Lord, unless we meet, as thus, each daily just requirement. Ah! divinest Master, life is so various, its exigencies are so urgent, so serious, our

desires and hopes so boundless, that it is, in truth, difficult to realise the requisite insistency; and yet, without such insistency, how can our action be tempered in accordance with Thy supremest law, here and now, O Lord, as well as in further heaven.

THE FREEDOM OF LAW.

WHAT miseries and sufferings, O Lord, attend our several shortcomings, our halting watchfulness—in short, our insufficing compliance with Thy all-perfect law. What, indeed, would we have? We seek the liberty of enjoyment instead of that of doing well; and yet is there a more real, more perfect, enjoyment, any higher liberty, than that of doing as Thou Thyself doest, O Lord—that divinest liberty from which Thou dost never swerve—indeed the liberty of doing well?

This highest liberty Thou dost, in truth, concede to us also—concede in conception, in feeling, and in deed. The liberty of going astray is but the liberty of delirium. The true, the only, liberty, O divinest Master! is to imitate, to realise, Thee. For this, this only, is perfect freedom, the freedom of law—Thy law—the freedom that endures for aye.

DEATH IS A DIVINEST ORDINANCE.

In one—the truest, best, if not only—sense, there is no death. Here the illusion, if we may so term it, of the senses, in some sort baffles our discernment. Otherwise death is not, as some insanely, most insanely, would imagine, a punishment, but simply a transition, a celestial expedient, a boon the divinest, for elevating and refining the soul. In what we term death the material indeed obeys the law of the material, whereas the soul is spiritual, and even in death's very act comes wholly under spiritual rule. That wondrous atomry, the body, which Thou, O God, hast framed for our instruction and development, amidst the varying conditions and requirements of space and time, falls from us, in truth, utterly, but our celestial affections and bright intelligence, unless to realise some higher standpoint, remain at once unimpeached and unimpeachable.

Although we die, so to term it, we do not, therefore, cease to live spiritually, do not for a moment, were it, cease to be men. The nobler attributes and capacities with which, O God of grace and goodness, Thou hast thought it seeming to endow us, subsist, progressively purified and perfected indeed, end without end. Moral

culture, the principles which good men and women instil, do not go for naught, but borrow, must needs borrow, further light and lustre, fuller, deeper insight, from the change.

Truth, goodness—Thy truth, Thy goodness, O Prince of life—as they are progressive in man here, shall experience like progression hereafter, swallow up perforce and annihilate every base, impure, unholy thing. That good will overcome evil, all evil, the record written in Thy heavens, O Lord, the glad acclaim of all the stars, declares. It is registered in the soul's depths, urged more or less hesitatingly, more or less insistently, in the several religions, moralities, and philosophies of men. Thus, as truth eats up and dissipates all falsehood, death itself is overcome by life, so that there will be no more death, any death, but associated with those who have gone before and those who are to follow after us, we shall subsist amid the diviner satisfactions, conditions, and pursuits, for which, without any colour of doubt or hesitancy, O Lord, Thou hast made the amplest and most heart-sufficing provision.

Let us, then, await, with all possible trust and confidingness, the mighty, the celestial change; for in blest reality death does not reside in severment, but only, Thou God of truth and mercy! in closer unison with Thee. The best, only real, all-sufficing preparative for death, then, is to do aright. Any other or different preparation than what resides in purity, uprightness, and

truth, is simply craze. We go but from one dwelling-place to another dwelling-place. The way of rectitude is indeed the way to die.

Our abiding, our real, home is not merely the earth, wherein our mortal vesture is laid, but the very, the lofty heavens. Death, then, is not decay, but life—indeed a higher life, diviner excellence—in truth, the ulterior or second life, the life which has no end. And Thou, O Lord, Master of the eternities, all the infinities, art with us in death's very article. Not for an instant, were it, dost Thou part from or abandon us, but art close by and inseparable as in the daily life. Ah! Father, Thou dost but envelope us in the mantle of Thy tenderness, take us to Thy heart of hearts for ever.

SELF-CONTROL.

O LORD, Thou hast bestowed upon us multitudinous satisfactions, gratifications numberless, all of them most allowable except when they come to trench on principle, or militate against that divine asceticism which should avert every excess that would sap the roots of life's holy tree. Without self-control, self-denial, self-restraint—in a word—man is no longer man, is unfitted to climb the heavenly heights, avert the soul's decay. The culture that fails to secure the mastery of self is naught, does not raise us in the scale of excellence, or, O God of all blessedness, enable us to approach Thee.

To think, feel, act nobly and well, is our appointed task ; and, as we compass or fall short of this, so do we also compass the better, the higher life, or incur those spiritual lapses which are the antithesis of all true nobleness, all real goodness. It is not position, or place, then, which realises the divine presentments, but only the soul's condition, its hopes, warm feelings, and affections, its faith, its insight, its holiness, and, above all, its love. Else, no belief, no profession, neither

clash of bells nor wordy ritual, no merely knee or lip worship, but only goodness in action, and purity of spirit, can in any wise avail, or conduct, O Lord, to Thy dear heaven.

SELF REDEMPTION.

THE soul, each soul, O God, but subject to Thy most precious law, must needs redeem itself. For this, this, is the very gospel of eternity, the message which, through every avenue of feeling and intelligence, Thou dost instil ceaselessly. Were all the celestial potencies otherwise to combine on the soul's behalf, it could not, without some effort on that soul's part, lift it from the dust. The spirit, but only through the powers which Thou, O Lord, dost impart, must achieve spiritual furtherance for itself, else furtherance is not achieved at all.

It is the case with each several faculty, every form of goodness or intellectual excellence alike. I do not for a moment impeach the efficacy, when rightly directed, of the kind offices of others, but, short of some personal effort, such offices will not avail. Induce, only induce effort, and at once an advance is made on the road to the stars. But fail, fail in this, make no instant strenuous effort, and all intercession, every interference, otherwise, is vain. Heaven will not perform our work for us, we must do it for ourselves, or else it remains undone.

Here, not to try, is of very necessity to fail. Let us,

then, not so much look for extraneous furtherance, as, where heaven itself has placed it, in the very heart within. Save thyself, O Soul, be and do what is holy, and just, and right, and true, and pure, then the Almighty Himself will save and absolve thee. This is the only safety, the only absolution. Else, no spirit need hope to enter at the golden gates that open straight to paradise away. We pray, but do not strive sufficiently, we grovel in the dust instead of straining manfully, clamour for some new revealing, as if the only, the eternal revealing were not now as ever close to hand, at our doors, indeed, and in our very midst.

Fain would we saddle another with the burthen of our deliverance, yet, peradventure, make no single effort to deliver ourselves. Man, O man, if you would be rescued, be good, only good. For to be good is rescue, salvation sure and certain, nor is there any other rescue or salvation beneath or beyond the sun. Yes, every noblest furtherance has been placed at our disposal, and we have but to stretch our hands out to lay hold of it. How cruel then is it to decry self-effort, since, in effort, strenuous effort, only, not in clamour and intreaty merely, resides the very safety of humanity and our kind.

Religion, hitherto, has insisted, and, in one sense, most rightly insisted, that we can do nothing, O God, without Thy aid. But then, if we but strive enough, this aid is potential everywhere, and never, never,

absent. Let us strive, only strive, and the Lord will back our strivings, else, no aid is even possible. For this, this is the road, nay, the only road to the rivers of life, Thy very paradise, O God. Be and do good, O Soul, and our Lord will indeed save and rescue thee. It is the absolute condition of spiritual progress, the condition, *sine qua non*, the condition without which heaven's hosts combined should fail to conduct you to their celestial realm.

THOROUGHNESS.

DIVINEST Master ! Thou dost not paint one side only of the lily or the rose—the desert bloom is just as bright as that of the parterre. The sunset or the aurora, which, perhaps, no human eye witnesses, is not less lustrous, we feel assured, than that which we behold. There is, in truth, no halfness about Thee, O Lord, at all. In the seen as in the unseen life, the unseen as in the seen, Thou art in all things thorough.

When we examine creation's countless hosts, consider the shortcomings of our own species, we feel depressed ; and yet we believe—in truth, we know—that Thou, O Lord, wilt not suffer a single one to linger in the slough. We witness—alas ! where are they not witnessed ?—saddest traces of savage violence, blood-marks of violence and crime. And yet why is this ?—why but because men do not enough avail themselves of Thy divinest provisions. Those guilty of these dread transgressions, these most miserable and drear effractions, had nevertheless every susceptibility of head and heart, a natural fitness for all goodness, the truest excellence. But, then, these vast capacities, thy gift, O mighty and merciful God, were not turned to account,

were left neglected and uncared for alike in infancy and youth—nay, were suffered to lapse into every form of vileness and degradation. Therefore it is that men thus circumstanced become dastardly, and cruel, and mean, devoid of that celestial thoroughness which culminates in any and every excellence, and which alone can approach us, Thou God of all goodness, all truthfulness! to Thee.

THE FINAL, THE SUFFICING CAUSE.

DIVINEST Master ! Thou hast adjusted the world to man, and man himself to the world. As these lines are intended to meet the eye, meant to be read again, so hast Thou in creation addressed Thyself expressly to human intelligence. The object, indeed, is plain, the results are most manifest.

To my apprehension, at least, it appears simply insane to deny the adaptation, as a final cause, of the mother's nipple to the babe's mouth, and, conversely and equally purposeful, of the baby's mouth to the nipple itself, referring both to the operation of some blind, unconscious automatic agency. In truth, they are Thy divine work, O Mighty God—Thy most precise arrangement, Creator, Father, Friend !

Yes, each several adjustment in every single living thing is exquisite as it is perfect. The whole, in fact, is related to the parts, as the parts, in turn, are related to the whole. In the least as in the greatest details, the universe, O Lord, is Thy handiwork. Earth, indeed, is adapted to and nourishes man, just as the mother, by a divinest providence, nourishes and fosters her child. But the world, as witnessed in nature at large, sustains

exactest relations not to man's body only, but also to his heart, his soul. It tells us—the world tells us, O God—of Thy goodness, Thy unfaltering, tireless love; declares ceaselessly Thy immense, Thy mighty, ministerings over the entire earth, throughout space and time, in each and every soul.

THE AFFECTIONS.

AN! God, Thou hast not only imparted a soul, but a heart also, the possible seat of every lofty feeling and truest goodness. If in the possession of intelligence we indeed, O Lord, resemble Thee, this resemblance is enhanced a myriadfold by the endowment of a heart, the potential arena of every excellence. In truth, the heart, in its purity and perfection, is the culmination of all that is divine in humanity, cynosure of every sweet, ennobling, and heavenly thing. The heart, indeed, does not calculate, but haply aspires to goodness at a bound, and very often realises it, too, when otherwise the intelligence might fail.

The mind, in effect, guides and directs the heart, but then the heart quickens and incites the intelligence, which else might remain impassive and cold, a desert of sterility for ever. Of what combats, victories,—and, alas! what defeats has not the heart, in the long history of humanity, been the theatre?—of what devotion likewise, what sacrifice, and, ah! what love? As for the disinterested affections, taking them in all their bright array, like their Almighty Founder, they are simply of celestial sweetness and worth, and have a thousand, and

yet a thousand times compassed successes which, without them, no wit, wisdom, or genius could ever for a moment have achieved.

O God, God most holy, tender, loving, and true !
in imparting to man a heart, Thou hast indeed placed
him on the road to heaven, mated him with angels,
rendered yet more immediately accessible to him the
paradise wherein, without doubt, or hesitancy, or falling
through, Thou shalt one day include us all.

PLEASURE AND PAIN.

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O GOD, most merciful, most compassionate, Thou hast not only imparted intelligence to direct, the passions and affections to impel, but hast further added the prompt incentives of pleasure and pain, when the suggestions of experience or reason's tardy guidance might not otherwise sufficingly avail. The stern, yet haply purifying, discipline of suffering is a frequent enough attendant on this existence, not only during its course, but also when, at Thy divinest fiat, we leave it for the existence which is to come.

Unquestionably we are required to tolerate no avoidable, remediable infliction, and yet sickness, when inevitable, has often tended to develop the intelligence, quicken and refine the heart. Thus endurance and forbearance, as well as an infinitely tender compassionateness, are engendered. We further learn to watch and to wait, as likewise to sustain the last great change, with patience and equanimity. Pleasure, in its turn, yields an incentive in aid of many an otherwise ungrateful task, as pain deters those who, unequal to life's fitful encounters, might else rush upon death, the fittest encounter of all.

And, therefore, it is, we ought not to meet sickness and suffering with too great repugnance, ~~saying that~~ they are Thy ordinances, O God, stepping-stones, after ~~a sort,~~ to a higher estate, a yet more exalted sphere. Even in our uttermost extremity, Thou dost not forsake us, but art ever by. For the rest, we are bound to spend life, be it long or short, worthily and well, as also to shun those disastrous visitations, in the guise of preventable disease, visitations which are simply outrages, O Lord, on Thy providence, the casting away of mighty gifts, and only too often the frustration of Thy glorious purposes in placing man on earth and sustaining him in honour and dignity there.

THE ORIGIN OF ILL.

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DIVINEST Master! evil, as Thou knowest, is oftenest but uncompleted good, some perhaps otherwise desirable thing not fitly realised, fallen short of, or gone awry. Ah! if men but observed Thy law, would only valiantly essay to imitate Thee, how vastly would evil be lessened on this many-peopled earth! With only proper culture, guidance, and self-direction, incompetence, pauperism, preventable disease, and crime, which is the insanity of the heart, would severally diminish, and, it might be, even wholly disappear. Moral spiritual remedies and hindrances, in truth, but not the scourge, the halter, or the axe, are those which are all essential; are, in a word, a moral spiritual prevention, and, when that has failed to suffice, yield a moral spiritual cure.

It seems, indeed, certain—certain at least as anything in this world is certain, certain as are life and death and immortality—that, with adequate moral and intellectual culture, coupled with effective physical training, man would no more transgress divine law than he would commonly bound over a precipice or thrust his hands into flame. A well-developed, self-restrained individuality, conjoined with rightful spontaneous action, would then

assume its just position ; any serious shortcomings, whether of the heart or the intelligence, would prove less and less frequent, while unswerving moral rectitude and personal self guidance would become more and more the rule.

Few, even among religious and moral teachers, experienced physicians, lawyers of shrewd capacity, have any adequate conception of the terribly weakened will for good of the pauper, the criminal, the incompetent, and the insane. In perfect multitudes, the moral man, the man within the breast, has little or no living tangible actuality whatever. And what these multitudes really are, those who have to do with them day, and daily, and every day, alone can rightly tell.

Disastrous indeed was the error that severed religion from morality, from that physical and intellectual culture so indispensable to the more perfect man. When all is said, goodness and capacity are real godliness, rightful action staunchest orthodoxy. For goodness it is, goodness with intellectual energy, and not dogma merely, that approaches us to God, and most nearly suffices to realise the angelic life.

Religion, whatever be the ideal creed, is, after all, but the handmaid of morality, a means but never the end. Religion without morals, a religion that does not give the first place, or at least an equal place, to morals, is simply a delirium and a snare. Goodness, not mere profession, is, to borrow the language of players,

the trump card. The angel must condescend to the world's work, else he is no angel at all. So long as violence and falsehood and bloodshed, and theft and ignorance and folly, with incompetence and brute excess, anywhere abound, religion's real needs, which after all are moral needs, and no other, remain in so far uncompassed. What, I would ask, avails the fair profession that is not translated into working excellence? what is belief even, without some living, vital dynamis in action? Infinite in truth are the evils which come from placing morals in the background, and not setting them in front, their only rightful, proper place.

Ah ! it needs unflinching culture, efforts well-nigh infinite,—in short, all our means and appliances,—to reintegrate and fortify the mutilated energies of heart and soul, and haply restore the lapsed and fallen individual to God and to himself again. How much better, though, were it, by means of zealous, persistent, vigorous culture, from the very first, to hinder souls from going astray at all. Then, indeed, might men, all men, O God of goodness and of truth, come to revere and imitate Thee, while existence itself should be as one long hymn, not alone an ideal aspiration, but a thing of purpose, a tissue of exalted deeds and realities as well.

INTEGRITY IN PROFESSION.

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It is not man's profession merely that constitutes his moral individuality and worth, but what he really thinks, and feels, and does, and is. Yes, we must be as well as seem, act as well as appear. If a man declare himself an angel, a very messenger from heaven, shall that suffice to constitute him one? No, indeed; and unless his ways be angelic ways, assuredly he is no angel.

It is, in truth, an error that tends to sap and destroy right reason, all true morality, when people are brought to imagine that profession can replace principle or prove any possible substitute for purity of heart and nobility of conduct. No profession is worth the breath with which it is uttered unless there be a life conformable. We may hope, and even affect to believe, that, by reason of certain avowals, the Almighty, without more ado, will change our hearts. Ah, me! it is far otherwise. Without adequate personal effort, as well as the consciousness of well-doing, Heaven will not turn the heart of any one.

Yes, the greatest evil, perhaps, that has ever befallen

our race is the belief that religion and morals are two things, and not things simply one and inseparable. Some persons affect to treat doubt, all doubt, as a crime, but doubt, reasonable doubt, is often, very often, a stepping-stone to excellence. It is impossible, in truth, to become a real child of God without commensurate spiritual endeavour. No ; stupidity and ignorance, with whatever blind, unintelligent belief, are not, indeed, of the essence of heaven. There can be no adequate proficiency in morals, any more than in science or art, short of sequential effort and well-sustained industry. It is so in all things ; and the Deity has disclosed no secret by which, without right-mindedness and right action—in fact, aiming and driving at it ceaselessly—anything can be done. The great majority of men and women have no adequate conception of the amount of effort—real, thoughtful, single-minded, purposeful effort—needful to compass any greatly desirable moral or intellectual end. Empiricism may proclaim, human folly may assume, that it is otherwise, but it is not otherwise. The Almighty will not change hearts—in different language, will not perform miracles in our behalf. And, as surely as the light shines above, and Heaven has placed it there, no one arrives, or ever did arrive, at a real, appreciable proficiency, short of determinedly striving after it—in brief, O Lord, by aiming at and imitating Thee.

Spirit of purity, Fountain of all science, every truth,

no soul can rise above the dust unless through the directest culture and instrumentality of those golden capacities which, with this expressest object in view, Thou hast implanted in every breast. This, and this only, is the right reason and final cause of all religion, all philosophy, all morals—in fine, all development. It is the way, the only way, by which to meet and satisfy our boundless longings, avail ourselves of our inexhaustible capacities, or compass real heaven at last.

So far as this divinest purpose, so far as self-culture and the right culture of others, is lost sight of or evaded, every profession is made in vain. It is perfect ruin to our spiritual interests to proclaim that, in virtue of any doctrine or declaration whatever, men can or will become angels out of hand, exclusive of some adequate, conscious, personal, spiritual, moral effort calculated to render them so.

This mighty truth, O Creator, Master, Friend ! Thou hast implicitly revealed, not to one or a few only, in one place rather than another, but addressed to all souls and to all worlds. And well I know, in every fibre of my heart, that no excellence, no wisdom, no exalted goodness, unless by acting up to it, is otherwise for a moment realisable. What wars, what virulent persecution and invective, what tortures, what bloodshed, and ah ! what tears would have been spared our suffering species if only the miserable misconception

had never been broached that Thou, O God, could or would render human beings wise and good by dint of clamour and importunity, rather than by ceaseless rightful effort every day and all days, living and doing well!

You will not, cannot, strive, you say, unless the Almighty impart grace. Doubtless; but then this grace is imparted actually, and without stint or stay, to you, me—in short, to all men. To strive, indeed, truthfully and well yields celestial satisfactions, proves ever and always its own instant and supreme reward. For what, in truth, is divine grace, after all, other than the capacity for being and doing well? Ah! it is the most effective, it is the only reward. It is the absence of truthful, momentous instillments, the neglect, in fine, of our mighty spiritual capacities, that fills our gaols with criminals, our asylums with the idiotic and insane, our hospitals and our homes with preventable maladies—crowds every place, in short, with the helpless, the incompetent, the unready, as well as the morally and intellectually infirm.

How can it, in truth, be otherwise when beliefs at once the most dastardly and preposterous—beliefs, I am persuaded, not less offensive to the Deity than they are adverse to human excellence and human dignity—are openly proclaimed? With only sufficing sequential training—training of body, and heart, and soul—training conducted by faithful, zealous, competent

instructors — training, in brief, extended to every soul—not some, but haply all men, O Lord, might come to imitate Thee. Ah! Disposer of this mighty universe, they would at length learn to live worthily, and die so.

TORTURE DOES NOT CONDUCT TO GOD.

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TORTURE, whether self-torture or other torture, degrades humanity, does not conduct, O Divinest Master, to Thee. Qualities, in fact, have been ascribed to the Almighty at variance utterly with mercy, and love, and all compassionateness. He, our Father, has been virtually represented as deriving satisfaction, here and hereafter, from our misery, our wretchedness, and our tears, instead of being gladdened, and only gladdened, by our cheerfulness, our hope, and our joy. Human justice may well prove vindictive when vicarious justice—substitution and the whipping boy—is supposed to be acceptable to our mighty Benefactor, our Father, our God. How could the sufferings of the guilty, much more those of the innocent, by any possibility prove grateful to our Maker? The outcome of such doctrines is displayed in our conduct to children, whom at one time we scourge, then, after neglecting them in infancy utterly, we subject, as criminals, to an infamous death.

In the far East, birthplace of so many sanguinary creeds, persons were, still are, impaled, crucified, their eyes scooped out, besides being subjected to other appalling cruelties. Alas! it was so in the West also.

People with the divine name of God on their lips, but absent in their hearts, vied with each other in inflicting every nameless iniquity. Even yet the mutilation of God's divine and perfect work has, shocking to narrate, on some absurd religious pretext, become typical in certain faiths. All over Europe—it seems incredible wholly—men, women, children, oftentimes models of every propriety, all excellence, were, at one time, burnt alive in multitudes, or subjected, as falsely-alleged criminals and outcasts, by *avi-disant* teachers of religion, to the most hideous inflictions, whenever their convictions, or even their professions, poor things! did not happen to accord with the formula of the moment. “Am I, then, to blame,” exclaimed a young Jewess on her way to the fire—her years were but fourteen, all summed—in vain entreaty to the Spanish queen, constrained to be present and impotent to interfere, “that I was born a Jew?” Quite recently, indeed, long tresses of women's hair, as also the half-charred bones of victims, were discovered both in Rome and at Madrid, on the very sites of their execrable immolation. The expulsion of the Jews from Portugal, of the Arabs from Spain, of the Protestants from France, exclusive of its cruel injustice, plunged those countries into moral barbarism, and subjects to uttermost scorn and derision the pretensions of the perpetrators of such atrocities to exercise religious and moral sovereignty over their kind.

Persons accused of sorcery, witchcraft, and such-like

unreal, fantastic crimes, incurred in shoals a dreadful fate at the hands of Protestant and Roman Catholic fanatics, ruthless as they were sincere. The Council of Geneva and the Swiss Churches, sanctioned and incited by the founder of Calvinism himself, committed the at once irreparable imprudence and relentless cruelty of burning Servetus, a Spanish physician—a person, in various ways, of rare desert—in a fire, quick. In Edinburgh, Thomas Aikenhead, a youth who had ventured, in conversation, to impugn the doctrine of the Trinity, was pitilessly strangled, the theological doctors of the place and period, in the persons of the members of the General Assembly for 1697, then sitting, calling for, and it was said sanctioning his immolation. Louis Berquin was burnt alive in Paris simply for having circulated the writings of Erasmus. Nay, it is not so long since the frightful immolation of Calas on the wheel, falsely accused by bigots of the murder of his son ; the burning of Bruno, Vanini, Huss ; of the good priest Urbain Grandier, at the subornation, it was alleged, of Cardinal Richelieu—terrible to think of, shocking to detail ! Even well on in the last century—it seems impossible utterly—a woman, falsely and murderously styled a witch, was burned alive in Scotland. Those whose business it ought to be to deal in messages of mercy and love, and forgiveness and peace, are full of menace, and denunciation, and doom, teachings as deficient in moral, spiritual refinement, as they

are in reality and truth. "The damned," exclaims Protestant Boston, in his "Fourfold State," "shall roar like wild bulls caught in a net!" Mr Spurgeon, in his "Treasury of David"—the unscrupulous David—assures the sinner that hell is his entailed estate, the cup whose dregs he shall wring out and drink for ever. "How foolish is it," he goes on, with fine alliteration, to add, "to fear the faces of men who soon shall be faggots in the fires of hell!" While a recent clerical orator in Westminster tells us that death and judgment—God's dear judgment, and death, which ushers us into the paradise of our Lord—shall be speedily announced as with thunderclaps. Gross, however, as are these averments, so wanting in good feeling and good taste, they are in these respects, if such be indeed possible, far exceeded by Father Furnis, a Roman Catholic divine, in his "Sight of Hell," a tract which is simply the climax of all the insanities. He sups, in truth, poor soul! on horrors, sets forth every conceivable sickening detail, revels in brimstone, boiling pitch and flame, dancing devils, red-hot coffins, in which he doubles up his victims—in short, *autos de fe* and Inquisition tortures prolonged end without end.

But juridical inflictions were often hardly less infamously revolting. A Russian princess had the ineffable atrocity to order one of her ladies-in-waiting to be knouted, branded, and her tongue torn out, all for having uttered a few slighting words. Peter, named—

misnamed—the Great, after having on one occasion tired himself chopping off some criminals' heads, handed his reeking weapon to the British ambassador, the savage adding that he, the ambassador, now might take a turn. At this current period, during the invasion of Khiva, the Russians, it is said, put the fugitives, without distinction of age or sex, to the edge of the sword. Their conduct to the Poles has revolted all nations. This very century, in England's capital, a woman, in her prime of youth and beauty, a babe in arms, was ruthlessly put to death, the milk gushing from her breasts as the hangman laid hold of her, because, driven by starvation—her husband, her sole support, having been torn away by the press-gang—she had taken a piece of stuff from a salesman's shop. A more savage act, if any quite so savage, never stained the annals of Dahomy or Timbuctoo.

At one period the political offender was hanged, drawn, and quartered. The heart, rent from the yet quivering frame, was flapped about the victim's ear, then cast into the fire. So recently as 1798, in Dublin two gentlemen, brothers in blood as in misfortune, were ordered to be strangled, and, while yet alive, their entrails to be burnt before their faces, their heads cut off, and bodies quartered. Ah, my soul! when the judge uttered the accursed words, did not his accents falter, his cheeks burn crimson, his tongue become palsied for ever? Alas! these, and such-like iniquities were

perpetrated to satisfy what was termed human justice, or, yet more impiously, O God of sweetness, and goodness, and love! in order to meet what was said to be Thine. Torture was looked on as a propitiation, still forms an article of stolid faith in many a saddening creed. What, what are we to think of those who sanction the dastardly infliction of the lash, who can gaze with composure on garments reeking with gore, and the living flesh, framed with such tender care, rent to shreds? God consents indeed, but not for ever. And although the victims' voices were stilled in the leaping flames—flames leaping to destroy—and their poor ashes scattered to the winds, their images yet beckon to us from the dust. Yes, a day must come when every base and bloody infliction shall cease, when suffering, whether in this life or the life unseen, shall no longer be considered having the divine sanction, but only deeds of mercy, and gentleness, and love. For these, these only, with goodness, and justice, and truth, are the few but angelic requirements which can conduct to very heaven, cause the deep sense of Thy adorable presence, Thou God of all sweetness, all mercy, to well up in every breast.

DISCIPLINE.

DISCIPLINE, but a rightful discipline, O Lord, forms part of Thy provisions. We are bound indeed not to lie too softly when the many sadly suffer. Enjoyment tempered by restraint is lawful, but that reasonable asceticism which guards against excess, averts the soul's decay, should never be entirely lost sight of. Misfortune and hardship we are not, in truth, bound to seek, but when we do encounter them, they are assuredly to be borne with firmness and equanimity. Thou dost Thyself, O God, subject us to pain and suffering, not as inflictions truly, but to strengthen and discipline our souls, and haply to render them yet more receptive of angelic things.

Disease, and even death, as all good souls well know, are matters in themselves of little moment, but it is not the less of the very essence of heaven that they should be encountered with cheerfulness and firm resolve. There have been martyrs in lonely chambers as well as on those bloody arenas which so long disgraced the world, martyrs displaying such fortitude as

must assuredly have challenged the deep approval of every spiritual onlooker. When the Roman matron, plucking the reeking dagger from her breast, held it to her shrinking associate, saying—only saying—"It pains me not," the few but simple words sounded, let us be convinced, in all heaven's courts, shall find an echoing thrill throughout those courts for ever.

But man himself is required to discipline his will, and, so far as will can compass, render it a real reflection of the divine. For to will effectively, truthfully, and well, is to remedy all incompleteness, neutralise every ill. The infant man—and every one more or less is tutor to the young—needs extraneous guidance and support, at least until he become capable of effort and self-direction—in a word, fitted to take possession of himself and of the world. In truth, the narration, how much more, the spectacle of, and, so far as may be, ceaseless participation in deeds of mercy and self-sacrifice, should assuredly prove an ingredient in all culture, would tend to nourish and discipline the entire soul for good. Teachers selected from the ablest, brightest, best, ought indeed to dilate continually on the divine government as displayed in nature and the human heart. No child, were it for a moment only, should be permitted to witness, much more practise, any sin or soil, but only what was upright, and elevated, and pure. And thus, by continually aiming at heaven, each divine perfection, man, in virtue of the celestial instinct which

Thou, O God, hast implanted in every human breast, acting, with all his might, in consonance with Thy law—in fine, imitating and haply realising Thee, at last, might compass heaven.

WE DISCERN BUT DIMLY.

THE formative imaginative powers, of such infinite moment and importance to our souls, when poorly developed, permit little or no just appreciation of realities absent or unseen. What wonder, then, if to unimagi-
native persons the life invisible seem no better than a misty dream. And yet it is no dream, but a great and glorious reality, the actual vital embodiment of matters in truth divine. As it is, how insufficiently are most of us awake to the vast material sublimities that subsist everywhere around, the stupendous fabric of the universe, the immense chemistry and geometry of creation, the incessant action and interaction of material things, the prodigious arena, in fine, whereon we live and move and dwell. But the unseen, the spiritual life, is not less real, less immediately at hand, than the seen. Yet, ah, how sadly dimmed, too often, are our perceptions in regard of its celestial influences. What of duty, the developed heart, the blessed affections, the progressively perfected and disciplined intelligence, the expansive yet tempered imagination, in all of which the Almighty reveals Himself ceaselessly.

Ah! Divinest Master, let us be but persuaded of the

unalterable permanence of thy omnipotent law
unseen life as in the seen ; let us only be co
that we subsist under conditions immutable as
stars ; let us know that ours is not a purposeless,
less existence, but one replete, if we only will
shall be so, with noblest activities, every bright
able fruition, permitting the realisation, and, O
O Lord, the imitation of Thy untiring beneficence
ceaseless forethought, and entire goodwill.

THE DIVINE MESSAGES.

It is the business, not of one man, or set of men, only but of all men, to carry out Thy divinest purposes, to become as Thy very angels, O God. This truth, Thy truth, O Lord, is simple as it is sublime, it is the sum of right theology, the essence of all morality, marrow of true divinity. To be wise, to be and do good—in fine, O Lord, to imitate Thee, is the gospel of gospels ; it is indeed the message of messages, nor is there any higher. We are bound, in truth, to be thankful for every wise and rightful furtherance, but the Almighty has handed to every man the charge of his own soul. He, our God, is the real spiritual Director, nor is there any other.

You tell me, some one may say, that you love me and fain would rescue my soul. Very good, I believe you implicitly ; but first, O friend, what of your own soul, that soul for whose welfare I feel as deeply solicitous as you can possibly be for mine? Are you, then, a good husband, a good father, brother, son—in short, are you a good man? for to this it comes at last. Have you cared, and how have you cared, for the ignorant, the superstitious, the vicious, the destitute, and the forlorn? Have you provided, and how have

you provided, for your dependents? Have you fostered your intelligence, your heart? In fine, have you developed your God-given and most divine capacities? If you have been and done all this, you are in truth a child of God, fitted more or less to instruct and guide, believe or profess in other respects what you may. But if you have not been and done these things—and here no mere profession, no belief even, will prove any sufficing substitute—you are not, be assured, justified in assuming implicit charge of my soul or the soul of any one.

What volumes load the shelves of libraries, how vast is the literature of theology, and yet to be and do good, to love God and one's fellow, resumes all divinity, is the true, the only, the everlasting theology. But hark to that loud-voiced declaimer, full of zeal, clamouring to be heard! You will be lost, lost for ever, unless you believe as he tells you, and oh! for such telling! When, then, oh when, thou would-be instructor, did heaven deliver its messages to you? Never; and you know or ought to know it. But I too have a message one which I know and feel to be true. The Almighty, whispered it into my heart, as He whispers it into yours, has whispered it into every heart from the world's beginning until now. It is only, be good, be wise, for short of goodness and intelligence nothing, nothing can avail.

Let us strain, strain every nerve, to compass excel-

lence, each divine, celestial thing, the good, the beautiful, the true, for these, these are from God. Above all, let us not place the means before the end, substitute mere profession or lip theology for rightful conduct, or for one single moment even, imagine, that thereby we discharge any duty, satisfy any heavenly claim.

Yes, the Lord our Father tells you, me, every man as much as you or me, that we are to be and do good, good by and to ourselves, good by and to every one. For this is the everlasting gospel, the one only theology, the message of all the stars, the declaration of every unbiassed, heaven-fraught heart. Whoever is and does good, is in effect a very angel of God, and so far as his capacity extends, a mirror and an example, more or less sufficing, more or less perfect, of what every man, indeed all men, are intended to become, some forecast of the ulterior, the blessed life, that life where all difficulties are dealt with, every apparent contradiction disposed of, and where, O Father, God, and Friend, we shall abide in unbroken, undying consonance with Thy divinest law and with Thee.

EACH DAY IS A HOLY DAY.

As each day, in reality, is holy, so each heart, surrendered to God, should become a palace of holiness, and, like each day, to whatever limited extent, a real epitome of the completed purposes of God. Days of rest, entire rest, are, no doubt, desirable, but rest and recreation, alternated, are indeed needed in some sort every day, just as praise and worship, not in profession merely, but in thought, affection, and in deed, are also needed.

Fitly and dutifully performed, each several act is, in fact, holy, meets the divine requirements, becomes, in truth, a portion of the great life and action of humanity, just as every day, in its entirety, resumes the immense work of God. Each day, then,—not one day, but all days,—is in strictness holy, a saintly day, as every good man and woman, discharging duty, are saints and saintly, in veriest truth holy.

Than these, indeed, there are no saints, than such days none holy. For let us only consider, this universe, with all its contents, is of unsurpassable perfection and excellence, a work most divine—no mere automatism either, not self-developed nor set apart from

God, the Maker. Like our every possession, it is from Him. It is subordinated to His supremest will, the mighty business of creation, also as thus rendered subservient to the effective worth, dignity, and elevation of souls.

*GOODNESS IS ITS OWN SUPREME
REWARD.*



EACH and every act of goodness cherishes the heart, insures self-approval, merits Thy countenance, O Lord. For as a little leaven leavens the whole mass, so deeds of well-doing elevate the moral nature, nurture the entire higher life of man.

Ah ! it is a sorry return for the divine bounties to be ever clamouring for requital, as if the supreme of gifts, the ever-increasing power of being and doing good—in truth, the loftiest conceivable requital—had not already been bestowed upon us. To be good, only to be good, then, to aim, O Lord, at Thy law, is indeed real blessedness ; nor on earth, or yet in heaven, is there a higher. Not in this life, nor yet in the life to come, is there any reward for well-doing, save the consciousness of having done well. It is enough ; it is an angelic, indeed the most meet reward—the reward which Thou Thyself, O Mightiest Benefactor, dost experience for enabling us, Thy creatures and Thy children, to imitate Thee.

To be gifted with such a power, to permit some possible, were it never so remote, approach, O God, to Thee, is of all guerdons the loftiest, most precious—in fine,

the best. What utterance could do justice to it, or what aspiring excel a reality so sublime? Nothing, no, nothing, the disinterested affections themselves alone excepted, so nearly establishes our kinship with angels and with heaven. Not for now, nor here only, in truth, is goodness wrought, but for the infinite, the illimitable, to come. Every divinest faculty, the heart's ineffable emotions, each sweetest aspiring, as with clarion voice, alike proclaim the Maker's unspeakable tenderness, first in creating, then in suffering us to become co-partners in well-doing, and in the experience of this well-doing realising the greatest, most precious, and, in fine, most exquisite return.

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THE IMITATION OF GOD.

THE hope and scope, rightly considered, of all religion, all morality, all philosophy, the one supreme object of the great benefactors of humanity, is the promotion of spiritual excellence—in a word, nearness, O God, to Thee, the furtherance of Thy presumed will. Any other standard of excellence than this, the bare enunciation of which should bring home conviction to every heart, can only be productive of misdirection and ill. Truth is its own best evidence, obligation, and sterling reward. It needs no invective, does it, to convince us that snow is white and the lily pure, or that the angles of the triangle are reducible to two right ones? Does it, then, require any to enforce the sublime conviction that goodness is the very gospel of God, and that it alone consists in imitating Him? This, this in truth, is the message which echoes through every heaven, which one day must spread over all lands, extend, indeed, from sea to sea. For God, the One, the Only, is all knowledge, all potency, all uprightness, unerring utterly; and the claim of human beings to any infallibility or goodness different from what has been appointed by Him, and equally accessible to every man

through the development of his heart and the exercise of his intelligence—in short, any rule of holy life or action other than the imitation of the Almighty—is simply the climax of unreason, the pretension of fools.

Divinest Master, we are in truth called upon to imitate Thee—imitate Thee in Thy goodness, Thy holiness, and Thy truth—and though we should fail and fall, were it a thousand and yet a thousand times, we have but to persevere, and the gates of the celestial city—indeed Thy city, O God—the angelic keepers, not grudgingly or ajar, shall assuredly fling open to us at last. But it must be on conditions. There is no favouritism in regard of admission to paradise. Neither orthodoxy nor heterodoxy, as such, no profession merely, can in anywise avail; for without goodness, the divine affections, heaven's inmates might invite, but vainly invite, us in. Goodness—in a word, the imitation of the Almighty—is the only passport; it is, in truth, the very key to heaven. Be good, only good, and the Lord Himself will take you to his bosom; but without goodness no one approaches to, much more abides, there. In God's bosom, indeed, the broken heart is made whole, the wretched are comforted, every grief is assuaged, all care for ever stilled.

And yet, in a sense, it is so easy to be good; needs but to try, to try. For we cannot, no, we cannot, be good unless we try; thus are we constituted. No effort, however wistful, on another's part will suffice; you must

yourself essay. Effort, indeed, is the basis of spiritual progress, lies at the very root of life's holy tree. To try, but with all our energies—to try is, after a sort, to be already good, conducts us to the forecourts of the celestial realm, inscribes our names in the very registries of heaven. But goodness, or any approach to goodness, no one ever did or can realise passively. For, unless he offer, how is any one to be taken in? You may sigh, wail, implore, weep your eyes out, with bended knee indent the rugged stone, and yet, unless you try, unless in blest reality you become good, none of these things avail. O man insensate, how can the Almighty, short of effort, your effort, drape your soul in any excellence? Can credence, or profession, or beating the breast, much kneeling, wailing, or any tears else suffice? Effort, well-directed, persistent, spiritual, moral effort—in short, the imitation of God—alone shall pass you through the golden gates, enable you to tread the sapphire floor. You demur. God Himself, you say, will turn your heart. But does the Almighty plough your field or reap your yellowing corn? Does He charge the mind with science or art, irrespective of effort on that mind's part? Indeed He does not; but He imparts ability, the power to do so—that power which the purpose-fraught soul can turn to account when it will. And thus, thus is it with all goodness, with the imitation of God and realisation of the divine. Being good, and striving with all one's capacity to be good, are, in strict-

ness, one and the same. For effort, yes, effort—effort ceaseless and untiring—is the all-essential, it is the very sap and substance of the spiritual tree. But you will not strive, mayhap, and yet you expect heaven to do for you what you are made and intended to do for yourself. As no alchemy did, or ever will, turn base metal into gold, so no well-intentioned but otherwise superstitious rite, no minted formula, nor sacred vestment, nor cross nor candle, nor voluble utterance, nor sainted water, without due essay, shall ever conduct the leaden heart to heaven. With effort, only effort—right effort, strenuous effort—the Lord Himself will render you an angel of light; but, without effort, assuredly not in this or any world.

There is One, yes, One, the One, the alone-wise, all-good, unerring utterly, the all-pervading, all-pervasive God, who has bestowed on you, bestowed on us all, the divine, the celestial gift—in fine, the immense potentiality of imitating Him. But wishes only, without action corresponding, will insure no progress, nor any real furtherance on the heavenly road. The idea, indeed, that, short of being and doing and becoming, one may arrive at goodness, any blessedness, is simply to run counter to the constitution of the human soul, to court disappointment, all wretchedness.

The hope of man, the regeneration and safe-keeping of the world, reside, O God—for so hast Thou ruled it—in imitating Thee, and in no other actual or possible

thing. While meeting all reasonable require training the young, exerting every worthiest f let us become, as thus, very benefactors of our and the world. Then, then in truth, would the kingdom reign, in fact and in deed, in every each pure and lofty aspiration would be satisfie rule, O God of every blessedness ! would sub all the earth, and we should complete our ap term in the joyous realisation of the present and ful anticipation of the time which is to come.

*GOD'S KINGDOM IS A KINGDOM OF
REASON.*



NATURE, the entire universe, is a kingdom of reason—in truth, a kingdom of heaven and of God. Thy empire, O Lord, is the supreme of reason, and those who would find fault with Thy creation and its ordering, should first be able to place themselves on a level with Thy divinest intelligence, scan all space, survey all time. Things which, like some picture seen close at hand, appear perchance halting and defective, oft assume a very different aspect, when surveyed from a distant and more comprehensive standpoint. Objectors indeed there are who would have no sickness, no sorrow, no death—in short, none of the imputed anomalies which now so thickly strew the way. In truth these anomalies are more apparent than real, as well as vastly less inevitable than they seem. How many arise from ignorance, mismanagement, and neglect, man devouring simply because man allows them to devour him, will not so much as lift a hand to turn them away. If only universal culture, culture moral, material, and spiritual, were enforced, we should better conform to divinest law, the evident intention of this so exquisitely ordered

and wondrous world, how many drawbacks would be mitigated, how many evils would be removed? How very different a scene would life, in truth, present, if only no laches or unjustifiable omission were traceable to our door, and if that which is holy and just, and right and pure, alone constituted our rule of action.

Some are dissatisfied, call it anthropomorphism, when we venture to compare man with God. After all, men are not apes or ape-like, pithecomorphism is but an insensate dream. Without or doubt or question, man, I affirm, assert, and declare, is not an ape or ape-like. He is framed in the semblance of his Maker and his God, to imitate whom is the sum of all honour, all dignity, all glory, all real happiness. For this likeness of man is a spiritual likeness, has nothing to do with his material form, but is vested in justice, and sweetness, and holiness, and uprightness, and purity, and truth. And by so much as these noblest requisites are furthered and developed, by so much, let us be intimately assured and persuaded, shall we resemble the Infinite Creator. The blesseddest, most exquisite thing in woman or in man, so far as limited human capacities permit, is to imitate—in short, to prove a fellow-worker with the Almighty.

O Fountain of light and love, Thou hast placed this blessedness within the compass of all, dost indeed hold out the princely boon of fellowship, of becoming Thy associates in well-doing. All the excellences, man's

action regarded, and which the world displays or has displayed at any time, arises, has arisen, solely from this imitation, the more or less perfect observance, O God, of Thy divinest law. Let us, if we will, harness the elements, subjugate nature, but in every and any case, let us develop to the uttermost the outcome of each single soul. If only we perform our part, the Deity assuredly will not neglect His. But our part and His own both, He will not discharge, that He will not do ever.

Yes, a day must come when the rule of duty, every just, and right, and pure, and holy thing, must prove inviolate. Instead of maddening strife and vilest outrages, men shall demean themselves as angels to their kind, O God, they will obey Thy law. Death, too, that pathway to the celestial clime, we shall learn no longer to dread. For death, with all the details of things invisible, is not the dire reality on which minds demented by ignorance and fanaticism love to gloat, but is bright, and beautiful, and good—in short, characterised, absolutely, by the same consummate prudence and reasoned forecast that attend the multiple arrangements of the life that is present and visible. Otherwise confiding serenely in the Almighty Being, who orders all things with such ineffable sweetness and love, let us abandon every issue to Him.

FAITH AND HOPE.

O GOD, we are bound to fare through this earthly life actuated by illimitable reliance on Thee. The love which Thou dost bear us we also should bear in turn. In cherishing spiritual insight we, indeed, imitate Thee; in developing our warm affections we also follow in Thy track. Faith, but a faith associated with and disciplined by intelligence, faith allied with love, and truth, and hope, is indeed precious, and, coupled with and justified by rightful spiritual effort, lies at the roots of life's holy tree. We cannot demonstrate the details of that unseen future, details which, as yet, we do not know; but faith—reliant, all-confiding faith—throws a causeway of gold over the else bridgeless chasm, lands us on the further shore. And thus it is, O God, faith conquers doubt, replaces it with trust and uttermost joy.

It is better far to have faith and hope than to possess a certainty, were it, without faith, and haply without love. Faith, and hope, and love, conjoined with reason, are buttresses of the universe, O God, they are pillars of Thy throne. Props and stays of loftiest paradise, without them there would be no higher life at all.

Yes, every sin and shortcoming, neglect of infants, hard-heartedness to our fellows, cruelty to our celestially-endowed associate woman, are ascribable wholly to our faltering faith, our halting hope, our laggard love, and these, again, to the insufficing, faulty culture of the young. Did we but rely on God enough, carry His holy law into steadfast action, it would fare nobly with us all. For faith and hope, and trust, and truth, and love, disinterested as they all are, teach us to rely unflinchingly, O Lord, on Thee. Without seeking or asking for any adventitious, extraneous return, they constrain us to place dependence, the most implicit, on Thy supremest will—in short, are in themselves passports to highest heaven.

*THE DIVINE ARCHETYPES SUBSIST
IN GOD.*

IN Thee, O Father, subsist those celestial archetypes, seeds, prototypes, of each true and sweet and beautiful thing. They are in Thee, because of Thee, and from Thee; for Thou, O Lord, art God of all sweetness, all beauty, all truth, all love. Not only are these archetypes originated, but, as we hope, and trust, and believe, are by Thee produced and reproduced in endless succession, as in exquisite diversity, for ever. I should else feel simply heartbroken when I witness the incessant spectacle of mutation and decay, forms the fairest, forms which, without the bright celestial counterpart, it would be impossible for hand to limn or imagination to picture, perishing, withering like the lily on its stem. But the idea, the divine archetype, is already there—that archetype which perishes not, which cannot, in truth, perish, since it is in God and with God, as we also are with Him, and in Him, and of Him.

O God of all refinement, every ecstasy! these, Thy exquisite creations, Thou dost, doubtless, reproduce again. Yes, there will be further flowers other aspects

of grace, and beauty, and dignity, other fragrances, yet other worlds and suns. Man, in his consummate excellence, all the bright realities of thought, and feeling, and love, shall subsist anew. There will be fresher, more diversified experiences, other and more developed utterances, with every divinest, sweetest, truest thing, for ever, and for ever, and for ever.

COURTESY OF BEARING.

MANNERS, at least in their perfection, are of the very comity of heaven. What enjoyment, indeed, can surpass that which is yielded by the intercourse of friends with friends, of beings wise, and good, and gracious, and refined, with each other? It is so in this life; it cannot well be different in the life which is to come. There, oh! there, manners shall yield satisfactions before which all others must pale. For courtesy has a grace peculiar to itself, is, in truth, its very own. It is, in short, as is the aroma of the flower, the perfection of melody, the fulness of harmony, the beauty of form—a thing to be experienced, indeed, but not fully set forth in words.

The Almighty, in all His revealings, is replete with courtesy to us, and we too, in our measure, ought to evince the profoundest, most reverential courtesy to Him. Ah! how different is the bearing of the self-collected, thoughtful worshipper, anxious, only anxious, O Lord, to win thy approving smile, from the rant and bombast that would rend heaven and earth asunder to compass their vain, fantastic purposes.

How we are to accost the wise and good of our own

species, how best, O Lord, address Thee, must, in truth, be left to cultured souls and chastened hearts themselves to decide. In good manners, indeed, we do but imitate Thy courtesy, Thy divinest graciousness, O God, to man. For as Thou art the mighty Geometer, Chemist, Architect of worlds, Master of all science, consummate in every art, the sum of beauty, and goodness, and truth, so art Thou, in Thy bearing to souls, the climax of gentleness, the perfection of every sweetness.

It is common with vulgar spirits to imagine that courtesy, whether divine or human, has somehow to do with weakness and want of purpose. They would associate vulgarity with decision, brutality with energy and power. Debasing thought! The loftiest courage, utmost force of character, most decided and vigorous bearing, are closely associated with that truest gentleness which is ever in consonance with the divine, the spiritual might and power which must put down and extinguish one day all barbarism, every brutality and crime.

The alliance of force and gentleness, in truth, it is, which is to renew and regenerate the world. Gentleness, real gentleness, as it is the very necessity of their existence, is, doubtless, the characteristic of natures of a loftier moral standard than our own. Bluster and brag only evince the deficiency of that moral backbone essential to the higher conduct of life and preparation for the great beyond. Gentleness is becoming in man ;

in woman it is the virtue *sine qua non*. Otherwise, courtesy and courage consort intimately together. They were well displayed in the tempered fortitude with which the victims of the Reign of Terror, thus so well named, most times met their doom. But examples, many, are not wanting of the lofty bearing, the unvarying sweetness and serenity, which men and women, indeed the glory of their species, have been known to preserve under circumstances the most trying. Yes, manners, thus imagined and realised, are the salt and grace of earth, and shall, doubtless, prove of the very aroma and ecstasy of heaven.

SUBSTITUTION.

SUBSTITUTION, O Lord, so far as I am able to conceive or imagine, is among Thy most potent agents for the purification, sanctification, and effective regeneration of the soul of man. Did we only make sufficient provision for our spiritual, our angelic needs, ah ! did we, O God, but enough imitate Thee, members, as we are all of us, of the glorious kingdoms of the Infinite, we should realise the celestial, the divine idea yet more fully than we do.

“We are conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity,” exclaims, with rhetorical emphasis, the Psalmist. Ah ! it is far otherwise. Is the lily, indeed, conceived in sin, or the rose shapen in iniquity ? In divinest reality, man is no more conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity, than are the flowers. He is born simply and truly an angel, Thy angel, O Lord, dear embodiment of Thy might and majesty, Thy illimitable tenderness, Thy unspeakable wisdom and love.

Here, indeed, two insanities meet, and clash alike with the real and the true, the insanity, namely, of theologians, and that of men of science, as they like to term themselves. The theologians declare that each and

every man, by nature, is a lost and ruined sinner in a lost and ruined world. On the other hand, the men of science affirm that some only, but certainly some, are born morally deformed and crippled. How absurd, how entirely unworthy of our Maker, our Father, and our God? Man is no more born wicked, or with debased, immoral tendencies, than he is born a linguist, a mathematician, an artist, or a whale. Like all the divine handiwork he issues exempt from every moral stain and flaw from the workshop of the Creator. The whole doctrine, whether as broached by so-called scientists or sustained by theologians, one as much as the other, and one not less than the other, is a figment only worthy of bedlam or the savages of Fiji.

If man turn out wicked and degraded, as, alas, he so often does, it is not that he is born wicked and degraded, but because his divine capacities are not developed adequately, because he is not trained rightly—in short, because, to borrow from the syllabary of fanatics, he is reared as a demon of darkness rather than a spirit of light. Pauperism, insanity, incapacity, and crime, dog the footsteps of the vicious legislator, incompetent instructor, and heedless, immoral parent, as the shadow falls on the dial when the gnomon stays the light of the sun. Vainly, vainly, O Father and Preserver of our kind, unless we avail ourselves of our mighty privileges, aim at purity, and sweetness, and goodness from the first, dost Thou bathe us in the

waters of life, set before us every bright, celestial possibility.

So far as is in any way possible, each fair and blessed influence should be brought to bear upon each several soul, the various economies and divine resorts of nature, the different requirements, duties, and delicacies of life—a father's provident fondness, a mother's unfaltering love, the teacher's sharpened skill—in brief, every surpassing, precious agency, whether as originated by the Creator Himself or turned to account by man. Unless we do this, and do it thoroughly, the intelligence cannot be adequately roused, the spiritual affections sufficiently developed, or conscience itself awakened to the full perception of whatever is just and holy, and sweet, and pure, and true. For as raindrop runs into raindrop, and silver quick fuses with quicksilver, so does the unperverted infant take in and assimilate each upright and generous and gracious presentment.

This, indeed, is the especial quality and constitution of our spirits, as conferred upon them by an allwise and merciful God. And thus if only just and effective procedures—procedures not contravened or thwarted by ignorance, fanaticism, or crime—were fully resorted to, approximate excellence would, indeed, be consummated, effort would replace sloth and vile inertia—in short, there would be the substitution of whatever was bright and beautiful and good, instead of what was degraded, unholy, and unclean.

LOVE.

LOVE, O supremest Master, is Thy transcendent gift, shows, were it but for a moment, the celestial possibilities of our kind. No other affection is so calculated to transfigure and take humanity out of its comparatively inferior self, set aside each base and brutal influence, raise us after a sort to parity with angels—in short, render us just, generous, and heroic, almost at a bound. For love, like death, is no respecter of persons, it almost infinitely exalts the recipient, sets prince and peasant on one common platform of elevation, spurns each imaginary distinction, replacing it by one that is tender as it is divine. It is an influence, in truth, that makes no exploit too vast to compass, no risk too great to run.

No amount of science, or literature, or art, renders a man capable of that of which love renders him capable. By the way in which any one discourses of love, you may at once measure his greatness or his meanness. Love, indeed, grafts itself on character, prompts to deeds, excellences, to which the performer else might never aspire. In a word, it is the purifier and regenerator of our species, a gift direct from the Almighty and

from heaven. Love, however, with all its transcendent outcomings, although in strictest alliance with whatever is ennobling and pure, will not alone replace culture, any excellence. For the highest love, truest goodness, the loftiest, most developed intelligence, to prove effective, must of necessity go hand in hand together.

*SUPREMEST WISDOM SUSTAINS THE
WORLD.*



YES, a supremest wisdom rules the universe. It is impossible that the incessant spectacle and example of Thy divinest economy, Thy infinitely-perfect arrangements, O God, when taken in connection with thorough progressive culture, should not, in the end, redress and neutralise all unreason, every wrong-doing in this or any world. The natural state and tendency, indeed, of unperverted man—Thy precious work, O Lord—is to think rightly, and act so. It is, in truth, a simple question of psychology, one which no theological quiddity or quasi-scientific assumption can, for a moment, be permitted to mystify. Man, no doubt, is liable to err, for thus has he been constituted ; but this liability is the needful condition of every bounded existence.

In the seen as in the unseen life, on earth as in lofty heaven, the final and sufficing remedy for all evil, every soil and stain, is the ceaseless aspect, O God, of Thy unfaltering reason and goodness in action, the unflagging imitation, so far as our competence permits, of Thy unutterable wisdom, and beauty, and love. Everywhere, unreason must be met and combated to the death

by reason, falsity by truth, what is base and erring by whatever is holy, and just, and pure. ~~These are the only~~ desirable or possible issues. They are agreeable, so far as we are able to appreciate it, with the constitution of the universe, and the conclusions which have won the firm support and assent of the truly good and wise of every age and clime.

*THE HIGHEST EXCELLENCE IS TO OBEY
THE LORD.*



YES, our truest worth, O Lord, is to obey and love Thee; and the purer and better we become, the higher our intelligence rises, with so much the more certainty may we hope to achieve this mightiest issue. Implicit obedience to Thy presumed will, each thought, and feeling, and act responsive, is the highest, best, indeed the very noblest, rule of life. Virtue, and wisdom, and knowledge, and truth, to be sure, are desirable in and for themselves, but this desirability is enhanced immensely by the glorious circumstance that, in realising them, we also, in so far, attain to the knowledge of God, the more fully do we become capacitated to love, honour, and obey. For virtue, and knowledge, and wisdom, and truth yield inlets, are themselves inlets, to the blessed, the celestial life, very keys of paradise—in fine, pathways to highest heaven. As the Almighty is consummate in all things, so every extension in knowledge and goodness commands increased insight, insures fresher, more perfect access to Him.

You cannot know God, some Feuerbach shall tell you, because all you know or can know of Him is but the

figment of your own mind. This, however, in a sense, might be alleged, with equal propriety or impropriety, of everything, for everything, as we know it, is conditioned, more or less, by the thinking, intelligent recipient. The common-sense of mankind—in this instance, at any rate, the best sense—has decided against wizards like Feuerbach, in that the universe, and heaven, and the human soul are not one, but several, and that our conscious personality does not alone resume and constitute the entire universe.

TO KNOW GOD IS TO LOVE HIM.

FEAR—heart-corroding, heart-consuming fear—is the curse and scourge of the world. Like hate, fear also is antithetic to love. Our reliance on Thee, O Lord, is, or ought to be, illimitable ; but how can perfect love consort with slavish fear? In love, truly, there is no fear—the love which, as the Christian apostle most rightly tells us, casteth out fear, and that he who feareth is not made perfect in love.

Mankind, I will assert, O God, cannot become Thy children, truly, until terror, hateful principle, shall be blotted out, expunged from Thy universe for ever. Children are scowled at, nay, scourged, to make them learn, as if the acquisition of knowledge, with the exercise of the intelligence, were not, in itself, a thing absolutely pleasurable. Instead of Thy divinest revelations, O Lord and Master of the universe, we have too often teachings only replete with desolation and horror. And yet truly to know Thee, O God, is to love Thee—love Thee with love unutterable, a love in which threats, and terror, and execrations, have no share.

The legislator deals in menace, issues edicts bristling with every harsh, revolting denunciation, as if the

proper instilment of what is just and true should not also lead to conduct just and true, and, haply, suffice to reclaim offenders, if not, indeed, to avert all crime. We scourge the defenders of our common soil, treat them too often otherwise with immitigable severity ; and yet the love of home and country, were men only sufficiently imbued with it, might well insure a more faultless demeanour than any that stripes and terror are calculated to enforce. The faggot, the halter, the knife, the impaling pole, incarceration and chains, have been all too long resorted to for the practical inculcation of well-doing, the punishment and repression of crime.

Labour, naturally so wholesome, honourable, and attractive, is, in too many instances, surrounded with almost every species of discomfort, danger, and degradation, just as if Thou Thyself, O Lord, wert not a labourer—in truth, the mighty Labourer. Yes, labour, under rightful, wholesome, honourable conditions, is a blessing only, not the curse which an infatuated theology would proclaim ; no mere repulsive drudgery, but a preparative most meet for heaven.

Can it, indeed, be proper to treat honest inquiry and conviction as if they were a deception and a snare, and, instead of gentle suasion, to urge doctrine with pains, penalties, and abuse?—yea, to surround belief, not with love, and hope, and joy, but with drear, and melancholy, and gloom ? and even then, not content, O God, with representing Thee as an arch-inquisitor, the founder of a

prodigious torture-chamber, too often turns life itself into a desolation and a hell. For the sweet messages of trust and truth, and faith, and hope, and joy, there have, alas! been substituted fire, faggot, and proscription, present misery and madness, with threats of eternal doom.

All just action, the most successful teaching, the soundest legislation—everything, in short, calculated to render man an angel of light instead of a reprobate and a fiend—are not only consonant with truest love, but involve it absolutely, and not fear, as the rightful, proper motor influence. Wit, wisdom, firmness, self-discipline, and refinement all imply, or are meant to imply, love's holiest, sweetest influences, and those only. In truth, fear is a most false and savage resort, and only worthy of savages. Whenever love shall once come to replace fear and menace in the conduct of life, the intercourse of men and nations, then, indeed, shall earth become holy land, this world a forecourt of heaven.

SUPERNATURALISM.

EACH thing and all things are sequential absolutely; the course of nature, as we know it, varies never. The Almighty is one, and His ways are one, while nature, His handiwork, is the Divine idea in action. There is no supernaturalism either, at least as distinguishable from naturalism; for everything is natural as conforming to nature, supernatural as coming from God; and the idea that events may be either natural or supernatural, sometimes one and sometimes the other, in the ordinary course of things, is simply a delusion and a dream.

In the excess of our desire, however, we fain would go beyond nature, heap miracle on miracle, seek wonders in word and deed, forgetful, meanwhile, that the world itself is actually the greatest possible wonder, a miracle of miracles, a world linked with the mighty universe, all the immensities of God. Everything, in truth, in us and about us, existence itself inclusive, is stupendous utterly; and the miraculous, let us be assured, resides, not in departure from, but in absolute accordance with, divinest law.

And wherefore should Heaven interrupt the supreme

order of events for your order or my order, which would be simply disorder? There is not, nor was ever, such interruption. Here let us carefully discriminate: it is no question of what God can do—for what can He not do?—but of what He does actually. Many things there are which we know to be true, yet cannot understand, but there is the greatest imaginable difference between such things and those other things which, know it or not, are not only unintelligible, but false and unreal as well.

Yes; everything, when closely looked at, is of unspeakable beauty, and wisdom, and grace; and the religious—that is, the really religious world, which includes, or ought to include, all wise and sensible persons, should lay firm, fast hold on whatever is reasonable and good, therefore true, rejecting, at the same time, absolutely, each dreary, desolate, supposititious dream, putting away the false for the everlasting, the omnipresent miracle, the miracle of life, and being, and rule Divine, the miracle of unending existence, and miracle of miracles, that we, O God, Thy creatures, are grasped fast and firm within Thy all-sufficing providence for ever.

D U T Y.

DUTY is the very rock of ages, conducts direct to God, realises the Divine. In truth, duty is on God's right hand and on His left; it is before His face for ever. Duty, indeed, is the very rule and emphasis of paradise—that paradise where no vile or sordid thing can ever, for a moment, dwell. It is the lode-star which lights us across the sea of life to the ulterior havens of eternity.

Every creature, man inclusive, performs, or ought to perform, without limit or restriction, the task—in a word, the duty—assigned to it. The lines of duty are not lax, but hard and fast lines, lines binding earth to heaven, lines sufficient to guide us here, adequate to conduct us thither. Duty, duty unflinching, is man's inner life—in fact, his higher soul. It resides potentially in his heart of hearts; must needs so reside, for Thou, O God, hast placed it there.

The sun, mighty, glorious, ineffable, rising this instant moment before my ravished eyes beyond the wave, obeys the Lord's assigned will. The stars obey it, the greater waters and the less, the rivers, mounts,

and vales, the grassy meads, each and every flower, all living things. And we, we too, must be duty-led if only we would consort with angels or ascend to orient heaven.

THE BOW.

THE bow, mighty, overarching, which yestere'en I beheld skyward, lofty, of lustre ineffable, is perhaps, of all the spectacles submitted to human cognisance, the most impressively glorious. It suffers not by comparison with the crescent moon, the starry galaxy, the mountain prospect, the widespread deep, or even the radiant rising and setting of the sun. No frequency of repetition, in truth, can dim its unutterable splendour. It suggests I know not what conceptions of power, and majesty, and grace. It looks, in fact, it almost seems, a causeway paved with chrysophrase, red jasper, sardonyx, lapis lazuli, the fire opal, and beaten gold, to heaven. Somehow it suggests the rush of the shooting star, the spring of the bounding roe, the exquisite grace of budding youth, the lone majesty of the desert palm. We accept, as men in all ages have accepted, it in token, O Lord, of Thy greatness, Thy mercies, Thy ever-enduring, transcendent love. It is, in effect, a banner of almighty power, flaming, flashing, towering, in the immensities, an earnest and a pledge, O Lord, of Thy beauty, Thy wisdom, Thy all-surpassing goodness and tenderness—the beauty, the wisdom, and the tenderness *that are to subsist for ever.*

SEEKERS AFTER GOD.

SEEKERS after Thee, O God, there are, there have been, many, ah! many, men, women, real, most real saints in thought, in bearing, and in deed, good always, and not otherwise. Yes; everywhere individuals of unsullied lives, and some of lives not wholly unsullied, yet mainly so, have borne testimony in thought and action to the Being who made them, and in seeking whom they became what they were.

Persons of angelic aspirations, too, have existed, persons nobly desirous to exalt their species at a bound. Every country has witnessed such; religious empirics and lunatics, however, I here expressly exclude. In Greece, Rome, the vaster East, Africa, and Europe alike, they originated philosophies more or less religious, religions more or less philosophic, anxious, all of them, though often most mistakenly, to promote human welfare, the felicity of their kind.

It was with them, as was many times evinced in their careers, religion and morals, as then conceived, in action, the furtherance of every excellence, the higher, peradventure highest, interests of man. For these, and *these only*, are religion's truest, best essentials, the desire

of each sainted woman and godlike man. They are, in verity, the direction in which, both as regards our intelligence and our hearts, we are chiefly bound to turn. The progressive, effective moralisation of religion and humanity—in short, the realisation in our inmost natures of the Divine, not any mere fancied instant change of heart and soul—alone can speed us on the celestial way, induce the infinite Father to take us to His bosom.

GENIUS.



GENIUS is the ideal of humanity, as religion, rightly conceived, is the ideal of morality. It is the multiplication of heavenly gifts, an intensification, so to say, of the glorious possibilities of man. In truth, it is as if Thy very breath, O Lord, were breathed into the human soul.

In poesy, genius actualises, so to speak, the eternal realities and fitnesses of things, sings them with celestial emphasis, a melody that never tires. In sculpture, it reveals the grace and symmetry of the Divine handiwork, all the sublimities of nature and art. Genius, further, forbids us to grovel, shows that we are not, as some sad theologies repeat, crawling reptiles of the dust, but potentially always, and very often actually, bright, beautiful, and good, as befits beings who owe existence, with all its glories, to the might and majesty—in short, the surpassing love and tenderness—of God.

But what does not genius do for us? In music, it bears the soul aloft, reveals ecstasies which are to come—brings us, as it were, O God, before Thy golden throne. In religion, aided and interpreted by science, philosophy, art, genius declares man's immense spiritual capacities,

lights up his hopes, aspirations, and destinies, proclaims the relations of souls to souls and of souls to God, enshrines the unspeakable love and solicitude which everywhere encompass us, and for which we never, never can make adequate return.

Yes; genius is the sublime of effort; it is the very antithesis of inertia, and sloth, and gloom—that inertia, and that sloth, and that gloom which are the world's ceaseless desolation and bane. It is, in short, the consummate fruit of unremitted industry, of trials, verifications, really almost infinite, and, like any goodness, cannot possibly spring up *per se* in the incult soul or at a bound. As with all excellence, indeed, genius without effort—tireless, ceaseless effort—is simply an impossible thing, would be a result without a cause, an end which had no beginning. It is like Thy kingdom, O Lord, which it so largely resembles and resumes, and like it, must be stormed, in a measure, to be gained.

Labour, indeed, apart from some heavenly waywiser, alone will never ensure genius; and yet, without labour genius cannot be. For genius, in its way, is likewise the imitation of God, and, in so far, a very realisation of heaven. In fine, genius is the culmination of effort, the soul's entirest strength—that effort without which, in some effective, adequate measure, no one finds, ever did find, his way to the stars.

IMMORTALITY.

IMMORTALITY, indeed ! just as if, O God, we could ever die. For the body is, of the material, perishable, whereas the soul is spiritual and eternal. All we are and know, thought, feeling, sensation alike, is spiritual, and, so far, at least, as we know, or as can be known to us, is spiritual only. Where, then, some may ask, is the spirit-life, that immortality for which you would thus so urgently contend ? To which I reply, that it is here ; it was, it is now, it is beyond each shining star ; nay, it is in the very soul of man.

We cannot, no, we cannot cease to be ; we can never die. The existence which we possess here and now, is the pledge and the proof of existence for ever—an existence replete with all goodness, every excellence, because living, O Lord, in unison with and ceaselessly imitating Thee. Time, space, have, in reality, nothing to do with the spirit's continuity. It is a question which does not come within their province at all, but is one relegated to an entirely different sphere. For what is time other than a designation for the succession of events—space, but the placement of material entities ? and what con-

nection, direct or indirect, have these with faith, and hope, and charity, and love? To experience these, indeed, is now, and at once, to possess immortality ; nor is there, nor can there be ever, any immortality which these attributes do not share.

Had there been no ulterior life, we could not, rational thinking essences as we are, have been brought to this. For to know Thee, O God, is to love Thee, is already to possess eternity. Death, or what we so name, the psychological blunder termed materialism notwithstanding, has no connection with man's conscious, spiritual perpetuity whatever. And, as each morning we waken up to a renewed being, so, after this interval, we, doubtless, shall also waken up to a condition truly sentient, one abounding with light, and life, and love, every thoughtful, desirable, personal activity, for ever.

O Father, Thou art our Comforter, Preserver, Friend, the mighty, the infinite God. In love, and truth, and a supremest intelligence, Thou art in most intimate unison with us all. But, irrespective of this, Thy general standpoint to our spiritual humanity, Thou art further—oh, reality most wondrous, most ineffable!—personally and individually related to each several soul. We do not, could not, for a single instant, were it, subsist alone or apart from Thee ; and Thou wouldst not, O Father, Master, Lord, have brought us hither, endowed us with such angelic, multitudinous potentiali-

ties, hadst Thou not designed that we should abide with Thee, expand in knowledge, capacity, and goodness in the radiance of Thy celestial presence, and in the fullness of a protection which has, indeed, no end.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

THE immense, the infinite merit of Christianity—a merit which no creed or philosophy otherwise comes entirely up to—is the preponderant value and moment which it attaches to the individual thinking principle, our very essence—in fine, the soul—that portion which is to love, and learn, and think, and act undyingly. And, of all Christ's real or reputed teachings, the Sermon on the Mount, the reference to hell excepted—as if there could be any hell except the hell of our evil thoughts and deeds—and the clause, “Lead us not into temptation”—for the Almighty leads no one into temptation—both possible interpolations—resumes, as I conceive, the truly moral, and, therefore, ever permanent bases of the Christian creed.

There is in this brief yet exhaustive discourse nothing about a devil, no mention of blood-sacrifice or blood-atonement, no supernaturalism either, much more any self-ascription of divinity. Then, how entirely replete is it otherwise with sweetness, and goodness, and love! The gentle voice, indeed, is hushed; but still the echoes reach us through the mists and lapses of eighteen hundred years.

Blessed are the merciful, they repeat ; blessed are the pure in spirit ; be perfect, even as God is perfect. And then, the glorious, the celestial prayer, " Father who art in heaven, holy be Thy name." Few and simple are the words. Would only that, blazoned on banners of gold, and borne throughout the world, replacing brute violence by reason, hate by kindness and love, sad doubt by faith and hope, their sweet persuasive tenor might haply turn all hearts to goodness, the eternal principles of truth and justice, every precious, bright, and holy thing.

For religion, true religion, all religion that deserves the name, with whatever desirable, surpassing, spiritual thing, is indeed natural, and not otherwise. In a word, it is of God, the One, the Only, and with it are all sweetness, all goodness, every purity and holiness, our dependence and reliance on Him, our appreciation of good and ill, the hope of a progressive existence to come.

YEARNINGS AFTER GOD.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Father, Preserver, Friend, I feel only too well how halting and imperfect are these utterances. Would, only, that I could borrow a seraph's insight, an angel's pen. I have written with no single thought save the furtherance of Thy presumed will in regard of the hearts and consciences—in fine, the better safe-keeping and well-being of our kind. If indeed there be any verity in these words, that verity, O God, is Thine; as for the shortcomings and omissions, they are all my own. I experience most times—would only that it were so ever!—a deep sense of Thy ceaseless presence and prevision, the pervasiveness of things Divine, realms of holiness, and beauty, and truth everywhere encircling us. Oh! that all might experience such, only better and more perfectly than I can essay to tell.

O Lord of light, and purity, and love! not for an instant, were it, do I lay claim to any special insight or illumination whatever. I would imbibe, were it, but a little of that divinest nutriment which Thou dost provide, pasture a little in those celestial pastures which Thou dost throw open to all living. How gladly, if I might, O Father, Comforter, Master, Lord, would I help to lull all unreasoning fear, assuage every soul-racking

perplexity! Thy kingdom, I know, I feel, is the supreme of reason and of truth, not of unreason and untruth. In my inmost heart I am persuaded that, when once the deep conviction of Thy ceaseless presence, Thy unrelaxing providence, Thy sublimest wisdom and truthfulness, shall be effectively brought home to every soul, the insanities, enmities, evils, miseries, and crimes—in short, the moral canker-spots and shortcomings which as yet partially disfigure and disgrace the fair surface of Thy creation—would finally and permanently disappear.

Goodness, that strenuous excellence which we witness not in a few only, but in many, ah! many, might, haply, be rendered the portion of all. For each given good man and angel woman are but samples, and not exhaustive samples either, of the universal capacities of our kind. And thus those celestial potencies—celestial because imparted, O God, by Thee—potencies which, with culture and effort, have sufficed to secure such desirable results in some—would, doubtless, with like culture and like effort—for to question it were to question the very purposes of Heaven—realise results not less desirable in all, a divinest possession for this life, a reversion sure and certain for the life that has no end.



